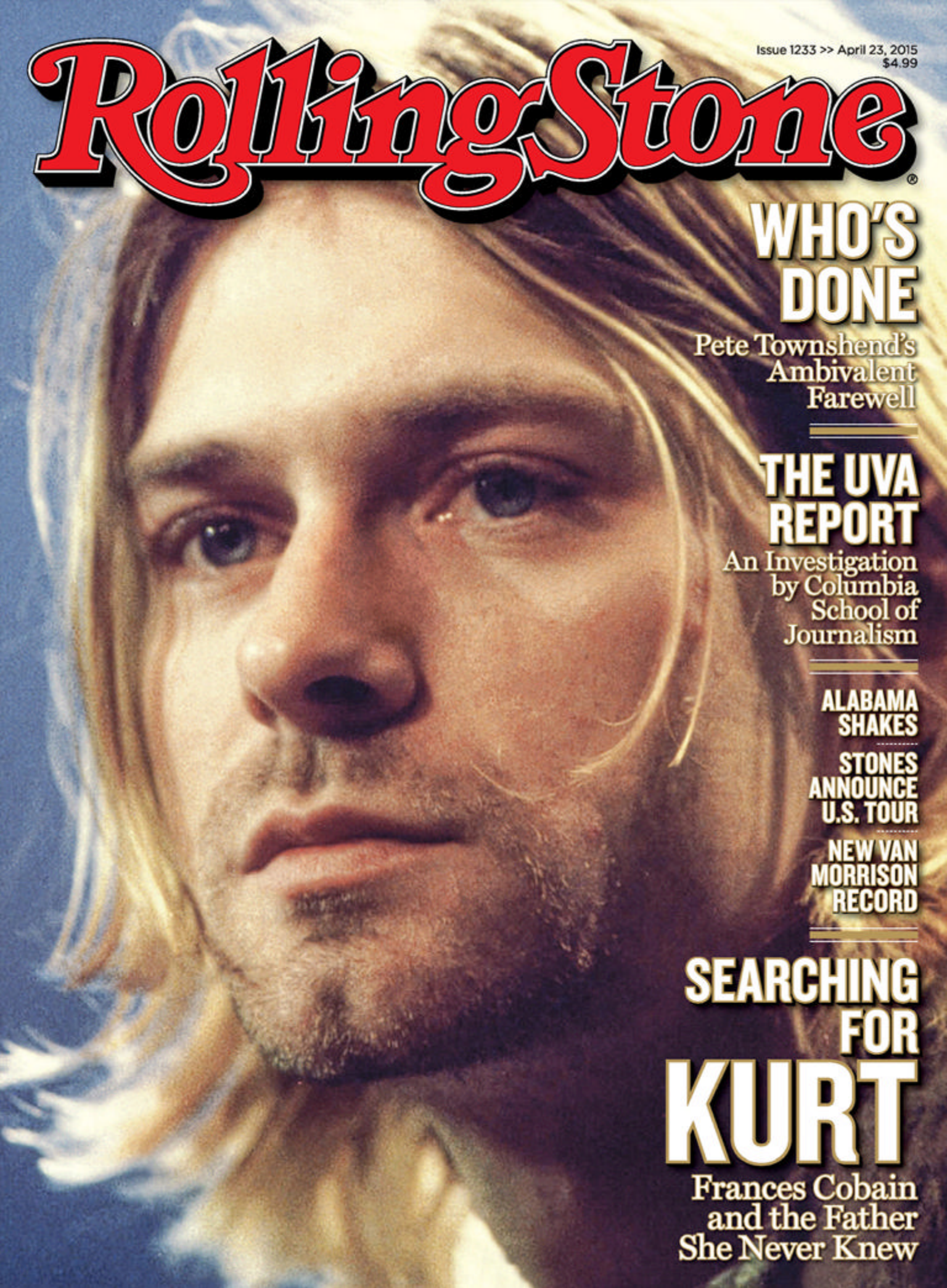




Rolling Stone

Issue 1233 >> April 23, 2015
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WHO'S DONE

Pete Townshend's
Ambivalent
Farewell

THE UVA REPORT

An Investigation
by Columbia
School of
Journalism

ALABAMA
SHAKES

STONES
ANNOUNCE
U.S. TOUR

NEW VAN
MORRISON
RECORD

SEARCHING FOR KURT

Frances Cobain
and the Father
She Never Knew



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LG G Flex 2

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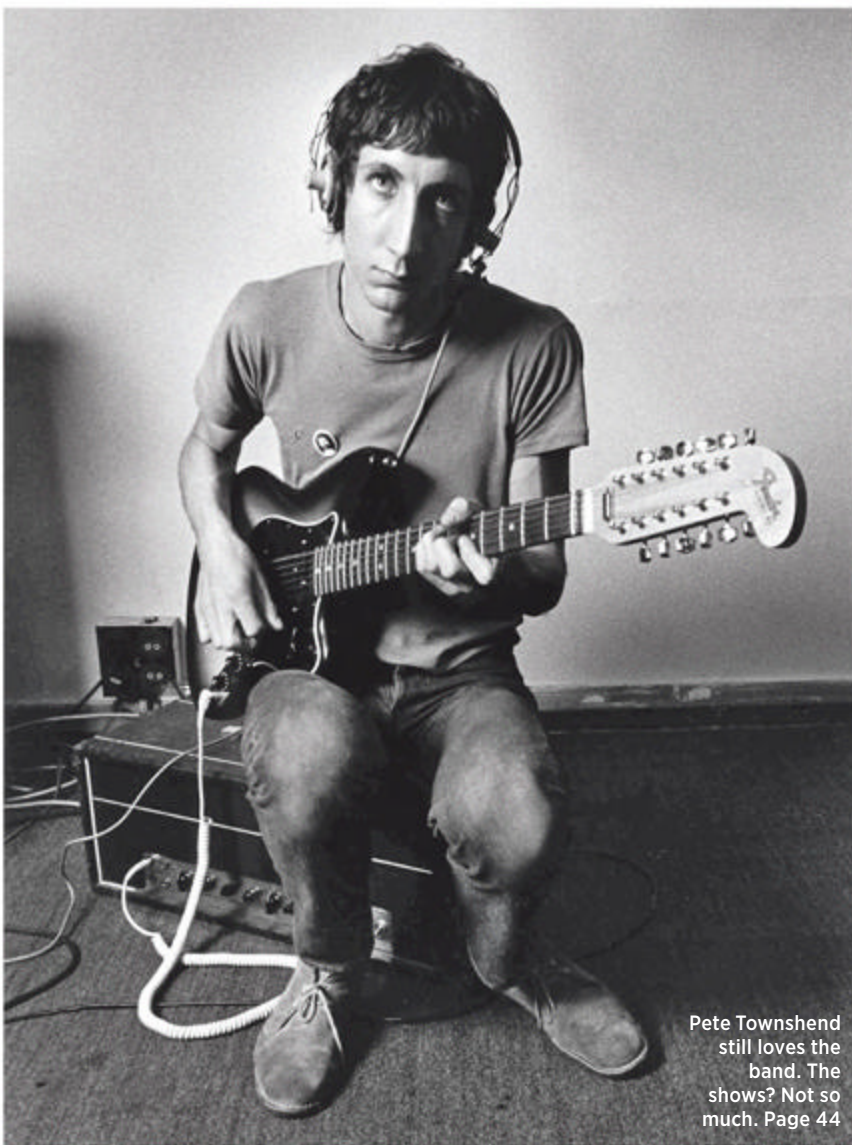
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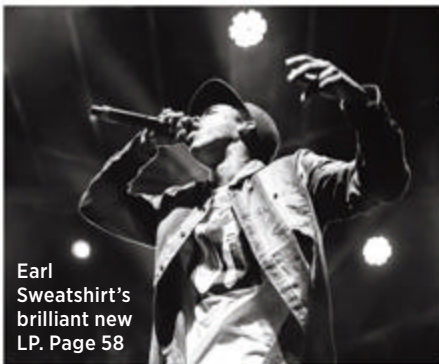
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Furious 7 honors Paul Walker and celebrates his too-short life.



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ON THE COVER Kurt Cobain photographed in New York on November 18th, 1993, by **Frank Micelotta**/Getty Images.

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TV

'GAME OF THRONES' IS BACK! OUR GUIDE

With the fifth season of *Game of Thrones* finally here, check out our recap of the premiere; a refresher guide to the new season; a detailed ranking of the best episodes; a new interview with showrunners David Benioff and D.B. Weiss; and a look at how the show mirrors modern-day politics in America.



Peter Dinklage as Tyrion Lannister



GALLERY

THE BIG FIGHT: MANNY PREPS

We spent the day with Manny Pacquiao at his L.A. gym as he trained for his five-years-in-the-making fight with Floyd Mayweather – undoubtedly the boxing match of the decade.



LIST

ROCK'S MOST ICONIC LOOKS

Check out our guide to the most distinctive fashion (presented by Levi's) in rock history, from Run-DMC's gold chains to Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.*-era blue jeans.



LIVE

COACHELLA: ON THE SCENE

This year's Coachella features performances by everybody from AC/DC and Steely Dan to Jack White, Drake, and Florence and the Machine. We'll have a complete report.



Rihanna

MUSIC NEWS, AROUND THE CLOCK

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THE PLAYLIST

OUR FAVORITE SONGS, ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW



1. Brandon Flowers "Can't Deny My Love"

The first taste of the Killers frontman's *The Desired Effect* is this oh-so-Eighties synth-rock anthem. When the fireworks in the chorus hit, you can almost see the John Hughes movie credits rolling across the screen.

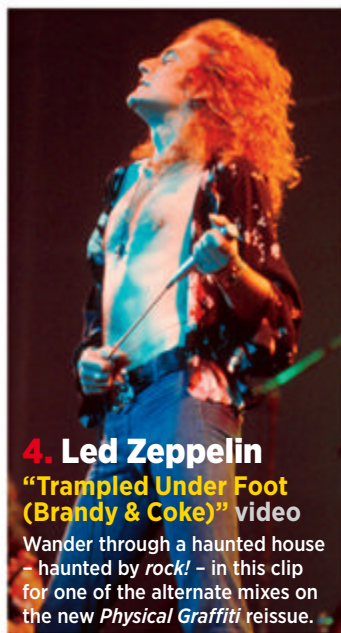


2. Celestial Shore "Gloria"

This twistedly catchy tune from the rising Brooklyn garage crew hits like the Pixies plus a big burst of psychedelic stardust. Watch it climb into your head and stay there for weeks.

3. Ceremony "The Separation"

These Northern California punks are best known for heavy-hitting hardcore, but on this preview of their upcoming *The L-Shaped Man*, they've gone full Joy Division. Enjoy the elegant gloom.



4. Led Zeppelin "Trampled Under Foot (Brandy & Coke)" video

Wander through a haunted house – haunted by rock! – in this clip for one of the alternate mixes on the new *Physical Graffiti* reissue.

5. Rihanna "Bitch Better Have My Money"

Are you the fool who tried to rip off Rihanna? You'll probably wish you hadn't after hearing her stupidly danceable new club hit.



6. Leonard Cohen "Choices"

Cohen shines on a rueful country cover from his new *Can't Forget*, recorded mostly at soundchecks on his 2008-13 tour.



7. Janelle Monáe feat. Jidenna "Yoga"

Maybe you're a master yogi, maybe you don't know a downward dog from a dachshund – either way, we bet you'll love Monáe's playful pop jam. *Namaste!*

EXPERT OPINION



Jim James

With a new My Morning Jacket album, *The Waterfall*, coming in May, we asked James what he thought of five songs.

OLD

Neil Young

"Don't Be Denied"

I remember finding this on vinyl 15 years ago and being floored by the rough sound of the truth.

The Rolling Stones "Memory Motel"

Mick was such a beautiful woman, and Keith the perfect husband – the way he sings backup is perhaps the greatest ever.

NEW

Courtney Barnett "Depreston"

Courtney is one of the great new surrealists. I am so glad she is here, writing about apartments and remodeling homes from her unique rooftop vantage point.

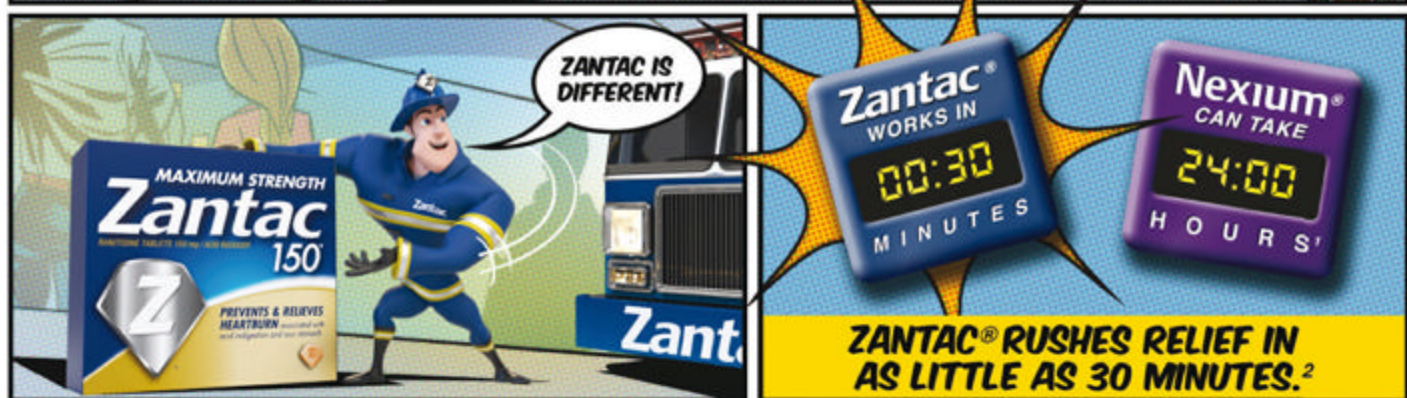
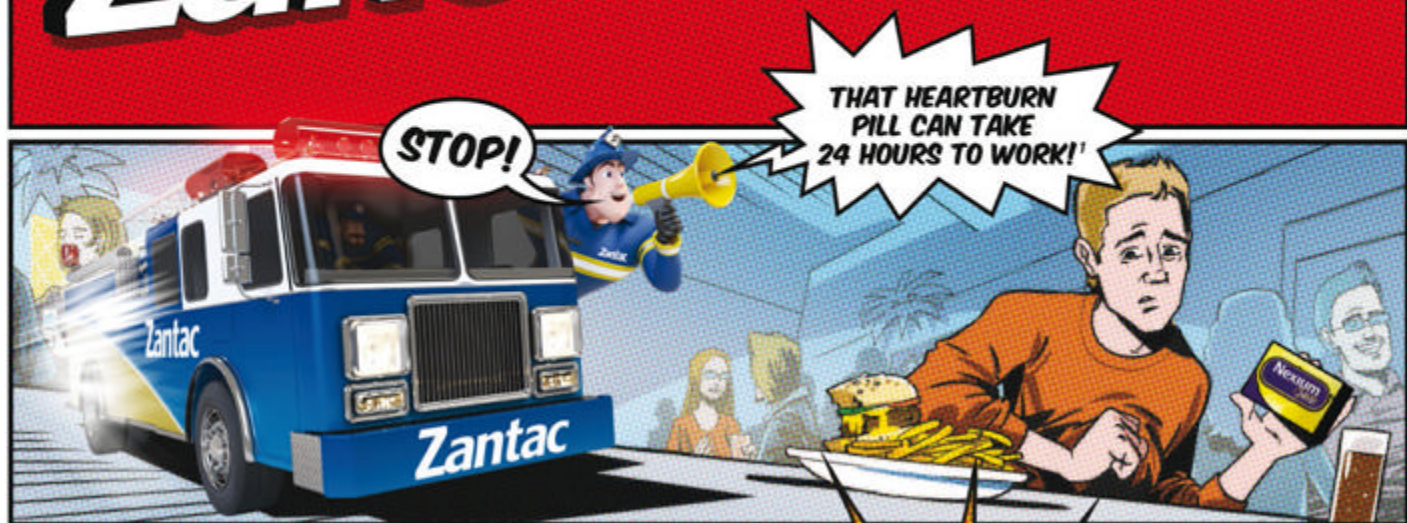
Nick Jonas "Chains"

Definitive proof that computers have taken over the world. Nothing is real in this arctic-tundra frozen landscape of a ringtone-commercial song.

Big Sean feat. E-40 "I Don't Fuck With You"

This sounds like something the bullies in school would listen to – cruel and heartless without a trace of empathy or love for their fellow man. Remember to give someone a hug today.

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CORRESPONDENCE

LOVE LETTERS
& ADVICE



Rap Genius

HIP-HOP'S CROWN PRINCE on the cover of ROLLING STONE ["The Trials of Kendrick Lamar," RS 1231]! Josh Eells did a stunning job taking us inside Kendrick's head, the place where the richest rhymes in the universe are born.

*Yvette Mason
Via the Internet*

I HAVEN'T ANTICIPATED AN album this much since Kanye's *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*. I can't wait to hear what Kendrick's got cooking: unapologetically black? Funk, spoken-word poetry and free jazz? Miles Davis and Parliament? Mix it with the Black Hippy aesthetic, and you can't go wrong. Kendrick's continuing to slay all comers.

Miles C., via the Internet

EELLS WROTE A GREAT PIECE – rich with the kind of detailed imagery Kendrick brings to his own work.

*Michael Pollock
Wilmington, DE*

ISIS at the Gates

MATTHIEU AIKINS' ARTICLE "Baghdad on the Brink" [RS 1231] was absolutely heart-rending. We've learned nothing from our experiences in Vietnam or Iraq. The devastating final sentence – "Its fate will forever remain on our con-

A Note to Our Readers

LAST NOVEMBER, WE PUBLISHED A STORY, "A RAPE on Campus" [RS 1223], that centered around a University of Virginia student's horrifying account of her alleged gang rape at a campus fraternity house.

Within days, commentators started to question the veracity of our narrative. Then, when *The Washington Post* uncovered details suggesting that the assault could not have taken place the way we described it, the truth of the story became a subject of national controversy.

As we asked ourselves how we could have gotten the story wrong, we decided the only responsible and credible thing to do was to ask someone from outside the magazine to investigate any lapses in reporting, editing and fact-checking behind the story. We reached out to Steve Coll, dean of Columbia School of Journalism, and a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter himself, who accepted our offer. We agreed that we would cooperate fully, that he and his team could take as much time as they needed and write whatever they wanted. They would receive no payment, and we promised to publish their report in full. A condensed version of the report begins on page 31. The full report appears on RollingStone.com.

The report was painful reading, to me personally and to all of us at ROLLING STONE. It is also, in its own way, a fascinating document – a piece of journalism, as Coll describes it, about a failure of journalism. With its publication, we are officially retracting "A Rape on Campus." We are also committing ourselves to a series of recommendations about journalistic practices that are spelled out in the report.

We would like to apologize to our readers and to all of those who were damaged by our story and the ensuing fallout, including members of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and UVA administrators and students.

Sexual assault is a serious problem on college campuses, and it is important that rape victims feel comfortable stepping forward. It saddens us to think that their willingness to do so might be diminished by our failings.

—Will Dana, Managing Editor

science" – is wildly optimistic. Who believes the country still has a conscience? We initiated an illegal war that killed half a million Iraqis while our government endorsed the use of torture.

Lloyd Hansen, Minneapolis

EXCELLENT REPORTING BY Aikins on the sorry state of affairs in Iraq, a country whose leadership is so corrupt that any American aid winds up in the hands of the embezzlers run-

ning this hellhole of a country. Every American should read this story.

Chick DeCico, Hammon, NJ

Hall of Fame Soul

ANDY GREENE'S PROFILE OF Bill Withers ["The Soul Man Who Walked Away," RS 1231] reminded me that when I was seven years old and heard "Lean on Me," I knew Withers was one of the best singers around. I hope Mr. Withers realizes that

Questlove isn't the only one who wants him back in the studio.

Art Pfeiffer, Bridgeton, NJ

AIN'T NO SUNSHINE WHEN Withers bemoans the racism he faced in the music industry, but then thinks it's perfectly acceptable to spew sexist bile.

Tracy Abell, Lakewood, CO

Forests on Fire

I READ JEFF TIETZ'S DEVASTATING piece about trees surviving on our burning planet, a day after Antarctica registered the highest temperatures ever recorded ["The Fate of Trees," RS 1231]. How can we ask trees to absorb CO₂ but then pump so much of it into our atmosphere that we kill them with it?

Anna Hickson, via the Internet

4chan Forever

CHRISTOPHER POOLE'S CREATION was schizoid genius, ricocheting between the sacred and the savagely profane, a website where the First Amendment was truly king ["Why 4chan's Overlord Walked Away," RS 1231]. I can see how managing it finally got to him. Note to Poole: Surfing does cure all ills.

Jeff Moses, via the Internet

Bakersfield Boy

SO HAPPY TO SEE COWPUNK pioneer Dwight Yoakam getting some ink ["Dwight Yoakam Goes Back to the Barrooms," RS 1231]. Eric Church was smart enough to put him on his tour – it's bound to make Church step up his game.

*Barbara Anne Summers
Via the Internet*

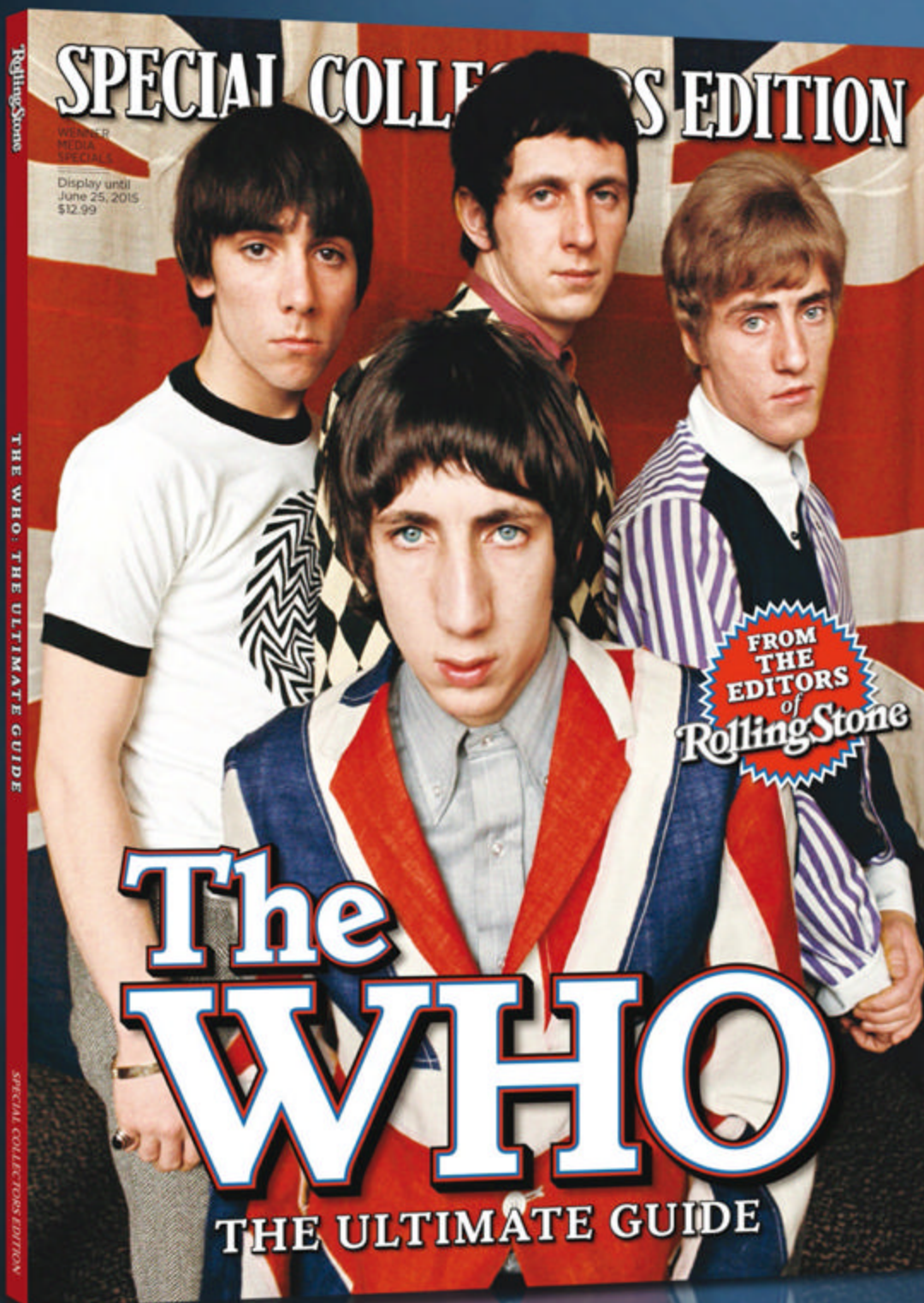
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Rock & Roll

Inside the Stones' Big Summer

Mick and Keith talk stadium tour, 'Sticky Fingers' reissue By Andy Greene

THE ROLLING STONES ARE COMING back – sooner than you thought and bigger than ever. This summer, the band will play stadiums in North America for the first time in nine years. The 15-date run, which kicks off May 24th at San Diego's Petco Park, also marks the Stones' third tour of North America since 2012, following five years off the road. "Everybody's really been enjoying the last few [Cont. on 14]

START THEM UP
Mick Jagger, Keith
Richards, Ron Wood
and Charlie Watts.

THE ROLLING STONES

[Cont. from 13] years," says Keith Richards. "We're all feeling energized."

The stadium tour will see the Stones play markets they missed on American arena tours in 2012 and 2013, like Columbus, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York. The tour also marks the first time the band has taken to the road to celebrate the rerelease of a classic album: *Sticky Fingers*, which comes out in a deluxe version on May 26th. The stadium run is called the Zip Code Tour, after the zipper on the Andy Warhol-designed cover of the 1971 LP. "We're floating the idea of playing the entire album," says Mick Jagger. "At the very least, we'll play the [songs] we don't normally do." The Stones plan to reconvene later this month to rehearse. If they decide to perform all of *Sticky Fingers*, they'll have to overcome one big hurdle. "It's got five slow songs, and we normally do two maximum," Jagger says. "Maybe we'd play it and everyone would go, 'Great.' But maybe they'll get restless and start going to get drinks."

The stage, which includes a long runway that leads to a second stage in the middle of the crowd, is the same one they used in Europe last summer. "Stadiums aren't drastically different than arenas," says Richards. "They're just a lot bigger, and you've always got the weather to deal with. God joins the band in one form or another." It also means that Jagger, who will turn 72 this summer, has to spend two hours a night running across a huge stage. "I up the whole fitness thing before a tour," Jagger says. "I do cross-training, and my trainer goes, 'Try and sing during this.' That's not really possible to do in a gym in front of other people."

The Stones will head out without a couple of familiar faces. Their longtime saxophonist Bobby Keys died of cirrhosis of the

liver in December. "I miss him, man," says Richards, "but he would say, 'This show must go on.'" Also missing will be guitarist Mick Taylor, who had been touring with the Stones as a special guest since 2012. "The last I heard, he's not available," says Richards. "I just haven't gotten into that thing, but I heard he was sick." (Through



a representative, Taylor says he is not sick and was not invited on the tour.)

The deluxe edition of *Sticky Fingers* will include a version of "Brown Sugar" with Eric Clapton on guitar, alternate takes of "Wild Horses," "Bitch" and "Dead Flowers," and live tracks from 1971 shows in Leeds and London. Unlike previous Stones deluxe reissues, there are no unreleased songs. "I looked very hard and couldn't find any," says Jagger. "The truth is that *Exile on Main Street* came after *Sticky Fingers*. In the *Exile* period, we used quite a few tracks we recorded in the *Sticky Fingers*

sessions. When we rereleased *Exile* [in 2010], we found some others that weren't released. That was a bit stupid, really. I should have kept some back, but I didn't really think about it at the time."

The group has put out only one original album (2005's *A Bigger Bang*) in the past 18 years, though there is some talk of cutting a new one. "It would be very nice," says Jagger. "I've got lots of songs that would be perfect for the Stones." Richards hopes it will happen. "We're talking about doing some recording after this tour," he says. "But there's nothing definite. I'd like to get the boys back in the studio."

In the meantime, Richards has finished a solo LP he cut with drummer Steve Jordan and Stones backup singer Bernard Fowler that he hopes to release in September. "The Stones have been working so much that I've been holding it off until we could find a reasonable time," Richards says. The album could lead to his first solo tour since 1993. "That's being kicked around," he says. "Usually, if I put a record out, I do some road work." Those plans might be placed on hold because Jagger is already thinking about another tour this year. The band's touring model over the past few years – roughly six-week bursts

followed by shorter breaks, rather than the marathon runs of the past – has been working well. "Everyone seems to be enjoying touring every year," Jagger says. "There's nothing booked now, but there's talk of [more shows] in late autumn."

Even though Jagger just welcomed his first great-grandchild (Ezra Key), he's hungry to stay on the road. "I'm not thinking about retiring," he says. Richards is on the same page. "I'd like to see how far the band can evolve," he says. "As long as I feel like it and there's people that will listen, we'll do it."

TRIBUTE

Cynthia Lennon, John's First Wife, 1939-2015

CYNTHIA LENNON, JOHN Lennon's first wife and the mother of their son, Julian, died of cancer at her home in Mallorca, Spain, on April 1st. She was 75. "She showed that through life's toughest adversities, one can remain kind, loving, generous, poised, graceful and classy," Julian tells *ROLLING STONE*. "[And have] an incredibly naughty and cheeky wit, too." In a eulogy, Paul McCartney called her "a

lovely lady" and "a good mother," and Yoko Ono wrote, "She had such a strong zest for life, and I felt proud how we two women stood firm in the Beatles family."

Born Cynthia Powell, Lennon met her future husband at art school in Liverpool in 1957. Beatlemania wasn't easy for Cynthia: She and Lennon married in 1962 after she learned she was pregnant, and Beatles manager Brian Epstein kept the marriage



IN HER LIFE In a recent photo, Paul McCartney called her a "lovely lady" and a "good mother."

secret for nearly two years. Once Lennon began dabbling in LSD, the couple began drifting apart. They divorced in 1968.

She remarried several times, returned to her roots as an artist, opened a restaurant and wrote two books. "I was at John's side throughout the most exciting, extraordinary and eventful 10 years of his life," she said. "It was a time when he was at his creative best."

DAVID BROWNE

'Game of Thrones' Goes Even Bigger

The showrunners on its huge new season, 'spoiling' the books and ending the series

THE LAST TWO SEASONS OF *Game of Thrones* have featured a Red Wedding, literal head-crushings and bow-and-arrow-wielding ice giants. But it turns out that showrunners David Benioff and D.B. Weiss were just getting warmed up – according to the pair, the upcoming fifth season is going to be the most epic to date. “We’re building to a crescendo now,” Benioff says.

What can we expect from this season?

Benioff: For four seasons, you’ve had all these characters who’ve been separated by geography – from Daenerys and her band of warriors roaming around to everyone in Westeros. Now, these storylines are starting to merge. It’s going to be a big East-meets-West season.

Weiss: It’ll be easier to keep things straight for the viewers – and for us.

Do you feel a sense of pressure coming out of the last two seasons, where you have to find a way to top things like the Red Wedding?

Benioff: Absolutely. But there is an overarching story, which means the battles have to get bigger and things have to get more dramatic... Two of the set pieces we’ve just shot are the biggest things we’ve ever done, in terms of shooting days and number of effects shots. On a story level... expect a snowball effect.

Is the endgame still seven seasons and that’s it?

Benioff: We’ve always said that, but we have to talk to HBO and come to an understanding. There’s a temptation to keep going with it because we’re still having fun, but you don’t want to ruin it by tacking on a couple of extra years.

Weiss: The big thing is, this is a show with a beginning, a middle and an end. We know what the end is, and we’re heading toward it now.

Benioff: We’re not sure whether it’s going to end up being, say, 70 or 75 hours – but it can’t be 100 hours. It would start to feel like a bogged-down mess.

When you guys spoke at Oxford recently, you mentioned that the show would soon be getting to major storylines before George R.R. Martin’s novels do – the headlines then read “Game of Thrones’ to Spoil Books!”

Weiss: I wouldn’t trust anything we said at that event. We were pretty drunk. [Both laugh]

Benioff: I’m not sure it’s possible to spoil George’s books. As the show progresses, it becomes its own thing in some ways... just because something happens on TV doesn’t mean it will happen in the novels.



FIRE AND ICE Emilia Clark as Daenerys on the new season of *Game of Thrones*. Weiss (left) and Benioff.

How is his relationship with the show these days?

Benioff: He seemed really happy when we saw him at the premiere for the new season the other night. George is a great guy about all of this. It’s a strange thing, but we are working at a certain pace because we have to.

Weiss: It can’t go on for 13 years. We need these actors while they can still play the characters.

Benioff: You can’t have a 32-year-old Arya Stark.

DAVID FEAR

Cox at Comic Con in 2014



NOW STREAMING

MEET THE FIRST NETFLIX SUPERHERO

How British actor Charlie Cox became the unlikely star of ‘Daredevil’

When Netflix needed a star for *Daredevil*, a new series based on the Marvel comic book, they looked to Charlie Cox, a 32-year-old British actor best known for the 2007 cult film *Stardust*. There was one problem: Cox didn’t see himself as superhero material. “I remember Skype-ing with the producers and thinking, ‘I don’t know if I’m the right guy for this,’” he says. The gangly Cox didn’t look like an action hero, and he was more interested in doing Pinter plays than putting on a cape. “Then [Marvel head of television] Jeph Loeb told me, ‘Episode Two begins with you half-dead in a dumpster.’ That was a very exciting prospect for me.”

The TV series, about a blind lawyer blessed with a radarlike sixth sense and an alter ego as a costumed crusader, recalls the noirish Frank Miller version of the comic. It’s a superhero adventure as something closer to a Seventies vigilante movie – *Taxi Driver* with special effects. “‘Darker’ was the word that kept coming up,” Cox says. He started boning up on the books and hitting the gym; soon, the actor was jumping into five-on-one fight scenes with gusto. “I found I liked playing an anti-hero more than a hero,” he admits, grinning.

Daredevil is the first of five planned Netflix series based on Marvel characters; Cox will play the same role in the network’s upcoming version of *The Defenders*, an all-star superhero team-up. Reactions from fans of the comic have mostly been welcoming, although, Cox says, “my mom sent me a few online comments. One said, ‘I don’t know him... but I don’t like his face!’” He cracks up. “Good thing I’m masked. All you have to like is my chin.”

DAVID FEAR



ALBUM PREVIEW

WOO HOO!
Coxon, drummer
Dave Rowntree,
Albarn and bassist
Alex James
(from left)

Brit-Pop Is Back: Blur Get Back to the Studio

No one expected the band to make a new album in 2015 – least of all themselves

TWO YEARS AGO, BLUR FOUND themselves in Hong Kong with time to kill. The Brit-pop stars had been touring Asia when their next gig, a Tokyo festival, fell through. “We said, ‘We’ve got five days. Let’s write an album,’” recalls guitarist Graham Coxon.

Since re-forming in 2009 after a six-year hiatus, Blur had made at least one failed attempt to record a new album. This time, they kept things casual, working on some of the 100 or so GarageBand sketches stored on singer Damon Albarn’s iPad. “We jammed everything until we couldn’t jam it anymore,” says Coxon. “And we drank lots of green tea.”

The sessions laid the groundwork for *The Magic Whip* (out April 28th), an album that picks up where the band’s era-defining Nineties LPs left off. After heading home to England, Blur more or less forgot about the instrumentals they’d laid down in Hong Kong. “It hadn’t been finished, and it was so sprawling,” says Albarn, who stayed busy with a 2014 solo LP. “I didn’t have the heart, patience, desire to go back through all that stuff.” The project stayed on hold until last fall, when Coxon volunteered to shape the rough demos into songs, working in Lon-

don with producer Stephen Street (who helmed four of Blur’s Nineties LPs). Albarn liked the results so much that he swung back through Hong Kong on his own to write lyrics loosely inspired by the band’s brief stay there.

The songs on *The Magic Whip* cover topics from protest politics to ice cream. Others hit closer to the group’s heart: Albarn says many lyrics address his complicated relationship with Coxon. “There are songs where it’s very clear that I’m singing to him,” he says, citing the downcast ballad “My Terracotta Heart.”

“There’s a certain joy which only this will ever give me,” says Albarn.

“It’s questioning whether I want to be in a close relationship with someone I had left.” Even now, Albarn sounds a little ambivalent about being in Blur. After the band’s split, he says, “I accepted that it was over. Then it slowly found its way back. It’s kind of like *It Follows*,” he adds with a laugh, invoking the horror film about a young woman pursued by a shape-shifting ghost. “It’s always walking toward me.”

Jokes aside, he’s happy to be on better terms with some of his oldest friends. “None of us are here forever,” Albarn says. “With Graham, in particular, there’s a continuity which goes back to the first time we played together, outside the music department in our school, when we were 11. There’s a certain joy which only that will ever give me.” **SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON**

MOVIES

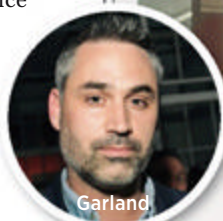
SEX, LIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Inside ‘Ex Machina,’ a smart sci-fi film where you might end up feeling for the robots

Star Oscar Isaac has offered the most succinct summary of the relentlessly clever new sci-fi film *Ex Machina*, out April 10th: “I’m building fuckbots!” But no one will confuse this tense drama with *Weird Science* – *Ex Machina*, which marks the directorial debut of *28 Days Later* writer Alex Garland, is an unnerving meditation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, the ever-growing power of Silicon Valley (Isaac plays the reclusive founder of a search-engine company), the nature of human desire and more. “People have a sense they’ve given up more than they knew to big tech companies, that they’ve given their human-



MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN Alicia Vikander as an imprisoned robot



Garland

ity,” says Garland, noting the sudden Hollywood prevalence of A.I. plots and tech villains. “It bothers them.”

There are only four main characters in the film, and two of them are robots: Swedish actress Alicia Vikander’s imprisoned, eerily alluring Ava is the focus. “They’re not playing robots,” says Garland. “They’re being humans, but they are doing it more perfectly than we do it.” But Garland doesn’t take alarmist anti-A.I. statements from people like Stephen Hawking seriously: Self-aware machinery, Garland says, “is not around the corner.” And, in any case, his sympathies are with the (theoretical) robots. “If you said to a machine, ‘I’m gonna switch you off,’ and the machine says, ‘I don’t want to be switched off,’ at exactly that moment, there’s an ethical problem.”

BRIAN HIATT

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FOR A FRESH, INVIGORATING CLEAN

THE
VODKA
THAT
MIXES
WELL.



ARTIST TO WATCH

JESSO
SCHMESSO
The singer in
London last fall

How Tobias Jesso Jr. Found Piano-Pop Gold

Meet the six-foot-seven singer with a batch of catchy tunes and a co-sign from Adele

A FEW YEARS AGO, TOBIAS JESSO Jr. was living in L.A., trying to make it as a guitarist and songwriter, when, as he recalls, “everything went to shit.” The Canadian’s visa expired, and his relationship with his live-in girlfriend started crumbling. Then, in the span of a week, Jesso was hit by a car while riding his bike, slicing open his hand, and he found out his mother had cancer.

Jesso moved back to Vancouver to live with his parents, picking up a job at a friend’s moving company. As his mom recovered, he started tinkering with his sister’s piano—an instrument he’d never played before—and wrote songs to work through his breakup. On a whim, he sent the tracks to Chet “JR” White of the now-defunct band Girls, who encouraged him to keep writing. Soon, Jesso had a batch of songs good enough to persuade White and the Black Keys’ Patrick Carney to co-produce an album for him.

The result was *Goon*, Jesso’s debut, an album of simple, sparkling piano ballads. Now 29, the six-foot-seven Jesso

seems more surprised than anyone that he pulled it off. “To be 27 and start to play an instrument that becomes the instrument you’re known for?” he says. “It’s out of this world.” Carney was blown away by the simple power of Jesso’s tunes. “His writing abilities are insane,” he says. “There aren’t many singers that could strip their songs down and have them hold up the way his do.”

Goon has earned Jesso comparisons to Harry Nilsson and Todd Rundgren, though Jesso insists he’d never heard of either until recently. “It just happens to be a bit throwback,” he says. Then he adds with a goofy laugh, “I wanted to be a tiny, bad-voiced version of Adele. But a guy.”

Adele herself helped launch Jesso’s career in January, when she tweeted the video for his single “How Could You Babe,” saying, “This is fantastic, click away.” (Jesso is rumored to have another pop star in his court: Taylor Swift, whom he was rumored to be dating. Jesso denies it.)

Now, Jesso is figuring out how to translate his songs live, despite his still-growing piano and singing skills. At SXSW in March, he was midway through “Can We Still Be Friends” when he hit a sour note. “Oops, first mistake,” he said, then smiled. “It was bound to happen!”

CADY DRELL

“His writing abilities are insane,” says Patrick Carney.

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Four More to Watch in 2015

FETTY WAP

Hometown: Paterson, New Jersey

Sound: Buoyant, hook-heavy hip-hop from a double threat. Fetty (real name: Willie Maxwell) often rhymes with tough-guy bravado, but "Trap Queen," his Top 10 single, showcases his high, tender croon. "Where I'm from, everybody wants to be rappers," the 23-year-old says. "So I started singing [too]."

Backstory: "Trap Queen" – an ode to an ex-girlfriend he used to deal drugs with – was among the first songs Wap ever wrote; he promoted it by handing out CDs to tourists in Times Square. At a show in February, Kanye West told the crowd it was his favorite song and invited Wap onstage. "He said, 'Keep your head and keep doing what you're doing,'" Wap says.

Small setback: Wap is missing his left eye – the result of a case of congenital glaucoma as a kid. It almost took his right eye, too, but "the doctor cut the nerve [and removed the eye]," he said earlier this year, "to stop me from being completely blind."

NICK MURRAY



Viet Cong, with Flegel (far left)

VIET CONG

Hometown: Calgary, Alberta

Sound: Dissonant post-punk cut with shimmering psychedelia, like PiL on mushrooms.

Backstory: The band was born from the ashes of the noise-punk outfit Women, whose guitarist, Christopher Reimer, died in 2012. Frontman Matt Flegel says that experience accounts for the gothic mood of Viet Cong's self-titled debut. "But," he says, "I feel like the next record will be lighter."

Name Blame: The band has taken flak for its name. Flegel calls the decision to name the group Viet Cong "a naive thing," adding, "Other bands call themselves Anal Cunt or whatever to be offensive. We didn't intend to be offensive."

CADY DRELL

TORRES

Hometown: Macon, Georgia

Sound: Soul-searing honesty backed by loud, grungy distortion.

Backstory: The 24-year-old singer-guitarist, born Mackenzie Scott, wrote and recorded her 2013 debut as an undergrad at Nashville's Belmont University. "I was pretty depressed," she says.

"I did a lot of late-night songwriting and whiskey drinking." She cut her raw, powerful follow-up, *Sprinter* (out May 4th), in England with PJ Harvey collaborator Rob Ellis producing.

Come to the Dark Side: Reading Ray Bradbury's *Zen in the Art of Writing* – a gift from her friend Sharon Van Etten – helped Torres get in touch with her anger on *Sprinter* standouts like the emotional sledgehammer "Strange Hellos." "That book removed some kind of filter I had on myself," she says. "It felt as though he was giving me permission to sing passionately about hate."

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON



LEON BRIDGES

Hometown: Fort Worth, Texas

Sound: Bridges can sound like a ringer for Sam Cooke, but he's equally influenced by Nineties slow jams. "I don't want to be called 'throwback,'" he says. "Sam Cooke and Ginuwine are different sounds, but not too different, you know."

Backstory: Bridges worked as a busboy and sang in a nightclub before recording his debut LP (due this summer on Columbia) in a Fort Worth warehouse that used to hold golf clubs. "I could brush up on my short game," he jokes.

Leonmania: Bridges was the breakout act at this year's SXSW – one gig was so packed a fire marshal nearly shut it down. "It was crazy!" he says.

PATRICK DOYLE



THE VODKA THAT NEVER BLENDS IN.



Van Morrison

On playing harmonica with James Brown, singing with Jim Morrison at the Whisky, and his new duets LP By David Fricke

THIS IS THE MEAT OF WHAT I DO," VAN Morrison says of his new record, *Duets: Re-Working the Catalogue*. "I like working with challenges. And I like working with other singers." Morrison, 69, resurrects deep tracks from albums like 1977's *A Period of Transition* and 1991's *Hymns to the Silence* with heroes and friends including Steve Winwood, Mavis Staples, Taj Mahal and the late Bobby Womack. Morrison also reunites with peers from Britain's Sixties-R&B boom like Chris Farlowe and P.J. Proby, who turns up in a new take on the 2002 tribute "Whatever Happened to P.J. Proby." Morrison subtitled his new album like a memo. "It's the reality of working the catalog," he says, "having fun but being practical, too. Because nobody else is working it."

The opening track with Womack, "Some Peace of Mind," is poignant, given his passing last summer. How was his health at the session?

We did the track in October 2013. I knew he wasn't too well. But he didn't show it on the day. He looked pretty good. When I suggested the song [from *Hymns to the Silence*], he said, "Yeah, I can relate to the lyrics."

Bobby was always on my list for *Duets*. This idea has been around for a long time. I approached George Benson [who sings "Higher Than the World," from 1983's *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart*] in the early Nineties. We were doing a gig in Montreux, Switzerland; he was with the Count Basie Orchestra. He said, "Sure, count me in." **One of your earliest duets was in 1966. Your band Them was at the Whisky in Los Angeles, and you sang with the opening act's vocalist – the Doors' Jim Morrison.**

We did "In the Midnight Hour" and "Gloria." He was really raw. He knew what he was doing and could do it very well. One thing that surprised me in their set was that Kurt Weill song ["Alabama Song"]. Nobody thought of doing that then. **In 1971, you cut the first of many duets with John Lee Hooker. What was it like singing with someone with such an unpredictable sense of rhythm?**



Easy. John said about me, "This guy knows it. And he can do it." There was no pondering or thinking. We just knew it and did it.

I first met John Lee when I was about 18, in London. I would always go to see him at the Marquee Club. When I went to the States, I reconnected with him. He used to come to my gigs, like when I played at the Keystone in Berkeley. He'd say, "Man, I love that song 'T.B. Sheets'" [on Morrison's 1967 LP, *Blowin' Your Mind*]. Then he recorded a version of it. He didn't give me songwriting credit [laughs]. But that's OK.

Another great early duet is from 1971 – "4% Pantomime," with the Band.

I sang it with Richard Manuel. I was living in Woodstock, and Robbie [Robertson] asked if I could write a song with him. That's what came out of it. That song was about Richard – he's in the lyrics.

On *Duets*, in "Real Real Gone," you cite inspirations such as Solomon Burke and James Brown. Did you work with them?

I did a duet with Solomon that hasn't been released. James wanted me to play harmonica on a jam. There was nothing rehearsed [laughs]. And I got to duet with Bobby "Blue" Bland.

What did I learn? Dynamics, which doesn't happen a lot in rock. I'm not really rock. It's not what I do. Soul, rhythm & blues, folk – there are all kinds of elements in my music. And there's psychodrama – theater – as well. This is where dynamics comes in. You don't get that

in rock music.

In making this album, did you find other songs that you're keen to revisit?

There's loads of them. Part of the problem was there are so many to pick from. There's 350 to 400 in the catalog.

That's a lot for one singer-songwriter.

The work was created for survival reasons. I had to make two albums a year for Warner Bros. I was churning out songs, and not every song got on an album. Over the years, for every album that came out, there was another that didn't make the cut.

I didn't know I was going to have this body of work. It was probably the Nineties when it started to become unmanageable [laughs]. It's even more unmanageable now. But the more you create, the more you have to manage later on. Because I'm the only one who knows what it is.



NEW
JUICY FRUIT
GUM WITH
STARBURST
FLAVORS



ENCOUNTER

Conan O'Brien

The late-night host on his viral success, visiting Cuba and the joys of acting like a complete ass By Jonah Weiner

THE WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY MASCOT IS AN anthropomorphized stalk of wheat called the Wu-Shock. It has a choppy thatch of fried yellow hair, a sinister sideways smirk and weirdly bulbous cheekbones – and Conan O'Brien, looking at its picture, needs no more than five seconds to nail the thing's unique grotesqueness: "It looks like John Tesh after he's been dead for four days." O'Brien is on the campus of a different college, University of California, Irvine, to tape a comedy segment that will run during the NCAA men's basketball tournament. UCI's mascot, which has Dwayne Johnson biceps and a bullhorn-shaped nose, is Peter the Anteater. The basic premise of O'Brien's visit here is twofold: 1) Learn from Peter how to rally a team to victory, and 2) Make fun of Peter, and other bizarre college mascots, mercilessly.

"It's a standard remote," says O'Brien, referring to those pre-taped bits in which he gets off the soundstage and into the world. "I like to go into these pretty much blind – with a sort-of-idea that changes as we go." He's sitting in one of the school's athletics buildings, getting his signature bang-swoop blow-dried to its full glory while hashing out a provisional plan of attack with two of his longtime writers, Dan Cronin and Todd Levin. "We like to keep it organic, but we do prep work to have some beats in mind, to steer it," says Levin. O'Brien, consulting pictures of various mascots, comes across Xavier University's furry, shapeless Blue Blob. He frowns. "This could be anything," he says. "This could be Ebola!"

At 52, Conan O'Brien has been a late-night host for 22 years, with a storied comedy career that remained essentially unstained by showbiz drama until 2010, when NBC, spooked by wobbly ratings, yanked *The Tonight Show* away from him after mere months. Four and a half years into his current run hosting TBS's *Conan*, however, what seemed then like an epochal setback has proved itself, slowly but unmistakably, as a rebirth. O'Brien regularly snatches the coveted 18-49 demographic from competitors. His average viewership (including video-on-demand and the TBS and Team Coco websites) has surged to 1.3 million, and his YouTube channel had nearly doubled its audience from just six months ago, with 92 million video views a month.

A big part of O'Brien's resurgence is his outsize viral success, enjoyed with a regularity that has come to seem routine: One recent remote, in which he suffered through a punishing Korean spa treatment, naked, with *The Walking Dead*'s Steven Yeun, has tallied 9 million plays since its February broadcast. All the while, O'Brien's taste for stoned-wiseasses-in-the-dorm absurdity remains undiminished. Just the other night, he built an entire bit around a wonderfully low-fi sight gag: A series of enormous cut-



out Robert Durst heads kept popping up around the set, the appearance of the millionaire alleged killer sending O'Brien and Andy Richter, his longtime sidekick, into frightened hysterics each time. "That felt good," O'Brien says. "More of that. Let's get crazy with it."

A field producer leads O'Brien to his first UCI interview, at a basketball court. O'Brien is wearing a tight T-shirt and jeans; on his wrist is a customized black Rolex Milgauss that his wife, Liza, got him for his 50th birthday, which reads TEAM COCO, in orange, on the dial. On the court, O'Brien introduces himself to Helen and Maria, two young representatives of the Anteaters' marketing team. There is no director: O'Brien picks the shot, with input from his writers and cameramen. The cameras start rolling, and O'Brien's demeanor turns drily antagonistic. He calls the anteater a "lowly beast," and produces a Photoshopped mock-up of the mascot, this one intended to make Peter appear more fearsome: His arms have been replaced with a chain saw and a lobster claw. "Would you consider this?" O'Brien asks. Soon, Peter shows up. O'Brien challenges him to a pushup contest, then cackles with glee as the mascot's snout keeps bumping into the floorboards.

When the cameras aren't rolling, O'Brien points out that the combative pose he's assumed for this segment is fairly uncommon. "As much as possible, I want the joke to be on me," he says. "I like it when someone else is the alpha." This was the guiding principle when O'Brien recently flew to Cuba, after President Obama announced intentions to normalize relations with that country, and produced a show from Havana – touring rum distilleries, learning to hand-roll cigars, taking rumba lessons. The broadcast drew criticism for pushing darker facts of the nation's history to the side. On this point, O'Brien mixes contrition and defiance: "If you do a Cuba show, people will ask, rightfully, 'What else could you have done?' I get that, and my answer is, we started with that one show. Maybe there's a way to go back and dig deeper. Go outside of Havana. But I didn't feel it was the job of the introductory show to hold people's feet to the fire."

What unites the Havana trip, this Anteater bit and all the other remotes is O'Brien's desire to inject unpredictability into a job that is by design repetitious, familiar and unchanging. "You go in waves," he says. "In my twenties, I was

really intense. But then you can start to settle into a groove. And that's good, because it means ease, but if you stay in the groove too long, you're in a rut. I think the *Tonight Show* fiasco had a lot of hidden blessings in it – it was like having a heart attack, having your heart restarted, having a near-death experience. It woke me up." Remotes, he says, "keep me honest. They're a pain in the ass. You're getting in the van. They take me out of the bubble."

O'Brien wraps the UC Irvine shoot, feeling good about what he's got. He poses for pictures with students, then his assistant, Sona Movsesian, drives him in his Tesla to a tony Mediterranean restaurant in nearby Newport Beach. Heads follow O'Brien as he walks to a corner table. I order a dirty martini; he gets a little carafe of chardonnay. "His drink looks cooler than mine," O'Brien tells the waitress when our beverages arrive. "He got a Don Draper drink. I got *My Super Sweet 16*." She heads off, laughing. O'Brien says he always liked it, as a kid, when he met a comedian "and they were the person in real life that they were onscreen," so he tries to live up to his own youthful

expectations even when there aren't cameras around. Or, for that matter, any members of the general public. "I was on a plane sitting next to Larry David recently – we both got invited to this Charlie Rose thing – and Larry started singing. I just go, 'Larry, can you keep it down?' And he's like, 'Oh, sorry.' Then he starts singing again. And he goes, 'Little loud?' And I go, 'Little loud.' Suddenly, it's an episode of his show, and I fall right in."

Stories like this illustrate O'Brien's robust playfulness. I wonder nonetheless, with the retirement announcements of his late-night colleagues David Letterman and Jon Stewart fresh in the news, if he ever hears his own clock ticking. O'Brien concedes that he does. "It's been 22 years now, and I really just don't know how much longer I'm going to do it for," he says. "But as long as I do, I want it to be fun." He emphasizes that the rigid trappings of the talk-show format remain more stimulating than stifling. "Constraint is good," he says. "I'm a Buddy Holly fanatic; I play that stuff all the time, and I can't believe how much you can move the world with just three chords. To break the form, you have to have the form: the desk, the microphone, Andy – the necktie!" He grins. "There's nothing funnier than a man my age, in a suit, acting like a complete ass." He polishes off his *Super Sweet 16* wine, and orders another round.

"The *Tonight Show* fiasco had a lot of hidden blessings in it," O'Brien says. "In a way, it was like having a heart attack. It woke me up."

COUNTRY

HOW KRISTIAN BUSH GOT HIS GROOVE BACK

The Sugarland guitarist on his solo LP and the Indiana State Fair tragedy

At 8:46 p.m. on August 13th, 2011, Kristian Bush thought a bomb went off. His band, Sugarland, was set to take the main stage at the Indiana State Fair in Indianapolis but was told to hold off at the last minute. Suddenly, winds caused the stage's roofing structure, rigging and lighting to collapse – killing seven of the country duo's fans and injuring nearly 100 more.

Sugarland were among 18 defendants in a lawsuit that was recently settled, which meant Bush couldn't comment on the tragedy until now. "I wasn't able to contact anyone who got hurt," laments Bush. "We were famous for a terrible thing, and we couldn't talk about it." (The court sealed details

Bush in 2014



on how the \$39 million settlement was split among the defendants; Bush refuses to point fingers for the incident.)

Bush faced two other challenges in the wake of the tragedy: First, his divorce from his wife of almost 12 years was finalized; then, Jennifer Nettles, his Sugarland bandmate, announced she was pregnant and wanted to do a solo album. Bush dealt with these developments with the best therapy possible: songwriting.

The Tennessee native recorded more than 70 tracks for his own solo album, then narrowed them down, surprisingly, to 12 of the most jubilant. *Southern Gravity* introduces the raspy-voiced, newly minted solo artist as an eternal optimist. "You can hear it as sunshine into a cave," says Bush, who also insists Sugarland aren't finished. "It's been dark in there for a long time."

BEVILLE DUNKERLEY



CALL I.T.!
Zach Woods, T.J. Miller, Thomas Middleditch, Kumail Nanjiani, Martin Starr (from left)

Valley of the Bros

'Silicon Valley' may not get all the geeky tech details exactly right, but it perfectly nails twentysomething angst By Rob Sheffield

THERE'S A GREAT MOMENT in the new *Silicon Valley* season where one of the local tech gurus rants about the coming data-storage crisis. "Ninety-two percent of the world's data has been creat-

Silicon Valley
Sundays, 10 p.m., HBO

ed in the last two years alone!" he thunders. We're looking at "Data-geddon." Somebody has to come up with the solution, and it doesn't matter who, as long as it's somebody he owns. He gives a superb summary of the Silicon Valley mentality: "I don't know about you people, but I don't want to live in a world where someone else makes the world a better place better than we do!"

Silicon Valley is about a bunch of young geeks who think they have the solution to Data-geddon, with their compression app Pied Piper. Their goal: Hit the jackpot by selling it to a venture-capital firm, while avoiding the clutches of Hooli, a thinly veiled parody of Google. But *Silicon Valley* hits home

because it isn't really about the tech business. On a sadder and deeper level, it's a satire of something more universal: delusional youth, in all its ambition and desperation. These bros feel trapped in their startup project, but they're really trapped in their twenties, the decade when you smell loser dust all over yourself. They don't know if they'll grow up to be cynical fat cats or bitter flops. All these young geeks really want is to be good at something. Is that too much to ask? Yes, actually.

The all-too-brief Season One got stronger as it went on, mostly because it kept aiming higher satirically. It's an open debate whether *Silicon Valley* really gets the details of tech culture right; there's an abundance of conversations that involve eye contact and a minimum of phone-checking, which is very suspicious. But it definitely nails the details of the young man's blues, that toxic cocktail of eager-beaver energy with a nagging sense of futility and doom. This is an all-bro world, a place where business negotiations involve terms of

endearment like "shit-riddled anal wasteland" and "choad-gargling fuck toilet." You get the sense that even in a town with a more humane male-to-female ratio, the guys of *Silicon Valley* would still exist in a bro bubble. "I'm an independent businessman," one geek proclaims. "Emphasis on independent and business. And man, too, now that I think about it." That's why

it made perfect sense for Season One to climax, so to speak, with an elaborate ballet of a dick joke, involving the terminology "tip to tip."

The token grown-up last season was the late Christopher Evan Welch, who brilliantly played corporate overlord Peter Gregory as a spacey man-child, a mix of Brian Wilson and Bill Gates. Welch died unexpectedly while filming last year, but *Silicon Valley* wisely didn't try to recast the role. Instead, Gregory in death looms over the story – putting all the twentysomething angst in perspective. (Too much fucking perspective, as Spinal Tap would say.)

Silicon Valley feels fresh because this could be *any* boomtown gold-rush culture. If it weren't about apps now, it could be about advertising in the Sixties, porn in the Seventies, investment banking in the Eighties or grunge bands in the Nineties. (The excellent Season Two premiere was written by a veteran of the Nineties rock boom, Chavez guitarist Clay Tarver, which makes all the sense in the world.) *Silicon Valley* could be any cultural phenomenon that sucks up the hopes and dreams of eager young pups who fully believe they'll soon be taking over the world. Some of your friends are probably already this fucked. That poignant sense of delusion dominates *Silicon Valley*. Is there anything sadder than a dude with a dream?

SHORT TAKE

Marvel's Noir Superhero

Daredevil
Netflix

Although Daredevil might have been the most film noir of the Marvel superheroes, he's always posed a challenge for TV and the movies – witness the ill-fated 2003 Ben Affleck-in-spandex version. Netflix's *Daredevil* turns the blind Hell's Kitchen vigilante into an entertaining meat-and-potatoes network-style crime show. Charlie Cox is the hero – by day, he's Matt Murdock, idealistic New York defense attorney; by night, he



Charlie Cox

fights crime as the hooded Man Without Fear. Blinded in childhood, he has acutely developed his other senses – he can tell if somebody's lying just by sonar-ing their heartbeat. The villains he battles are

pure cartoons, from the street thugs to the limo-riding slimeball suits; their conspiracy mixes union corruption and sex trafficking – basically a tribute to Season Two of *The Wire*. The MVP is Vincent D'Onofrio as Kingpin, adding a welcome touch of over-the-top hysteria.

R.S.

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"I don't do running. That's for squares. Walking is even worse." —Noel Gallagher on exercise

Random Notes



Get Behind Me, Zeppelin!

Robert Plant surprised festivalgoers with a special appearance during Jack White's set at Lollapalooza Argentina, screeching an earthshaking version of "The Lemon Song" while White put a frenetic twist on the tune, which borrows from Howlin' Wolf. ("The Wolf rides again!" says Plant.) "You know who that was," White said as Plant left the stage. "I don't need to tell you!" Plant has expressed interest in recording with White at Third Man Records. "I love his buccaneer spirit, and the way he dodges through the musical horizons," Plant said last year. "I'd be happy to make a single with him."



DOGGY DAY CARE Wiz Khalifa – who is about to kick off his Boys of Summer Tour with Fall Out Boy – took his pooch for a stroll in Beverly Hills.



AMBASSADOR OF HAPPY Pharrell Williams hung out at the United Nations before speaking to students for the International Day of Happiness. Happiness "can be something as detailed as a long-term goal, or as simple as the way I feel when my son smiles," he said.



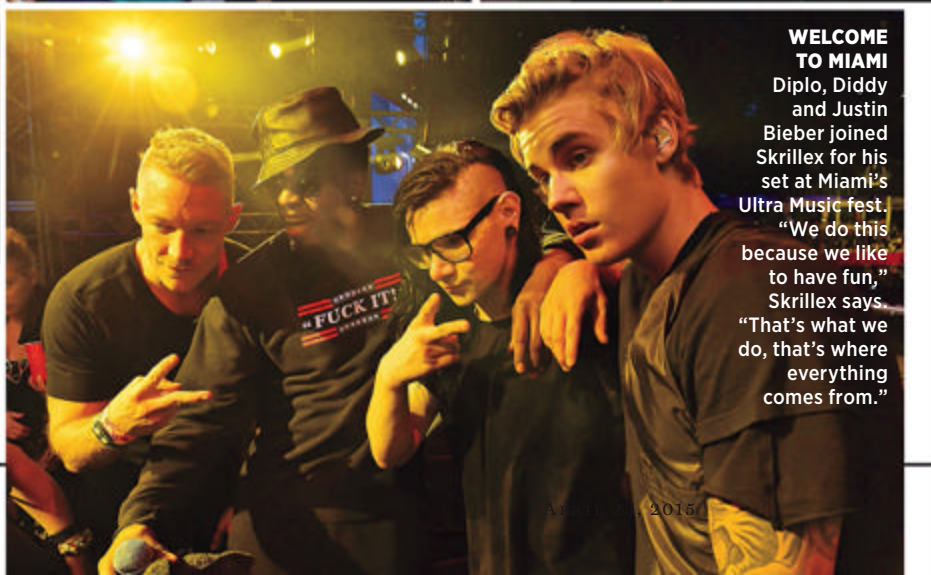
LAST OF THE BREED

Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson soundchecked before a sold-out run of shows in New Braunfels, Texas. "It's a mutual-admiration society with us," says Nelson.



SHARP-DRESSED MEN

Billy Gibbons caught up with David Byrne at Carnegie Hall during rehearsals for a tribute to Byrne and Talking Heads. "His offbeat vision still rules his marvelous creations today," says Gibbons. "A gifted artist!"



WELCOME TO MIAMI

Diplo, Diddy and Justin Bieber joined Skrillex for his set at Miami's Ultra Music fest. "We do this because we like to have fun," Skrillex says. "That's what we do, that's where everything comes from."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AGUSTIN DUSSE/REX USA; "ROLLING STONE" ARGENTINA; TERMA/BRUCE/SIPA/FAIRPLAY; BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE; SETH BROWAR/REX USA; STARTKAP/PHOTO.COM; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; JOHN DOYLE



STREAM DREAM

A dapper Win Butler joined Jay Z and Beyoncé at the all-star launch of the Tidal streaming service in New York.



POWER POP
Madonna and Taylor Swift caught up at their surprise performance at the iHeartRadio Music Awards. Said Swift on Instagram: “#MyFangirlLife.”



Saluting Stevie

Stevie Nicks was recognized for her work with wounded veterans at USO-Metro's 33rd Annual Awards Dinner in D.C. She accepted the award from Cpl. Vincent Mannion-Brodeur, whom she visited in a hospital while he was in a yearlong coma. “Giving them my love and support made me feel more proud than anything I’ve ever done,” she said.



CHARLI BLOWS UP

Charli XCX busted out an inflatable prop at O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in London. “I wanted to make something dumb and stupid and ridiculous,” she says.

THE FAMILY FOO

Before heading out to U.S. stadiums this summer, Dave Grohl got in some paddle boarding with his daughter in Hawaii.



YEEZY GETS BEACHY

Kanye took North West to check out beautiful dark twisted shells on the Malibu coast.





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‘A Rape on Campus’

What Went Wrong?

An anatomy of a journalistic failure

By Sheila Coronel,
Steve Coll and
Derek Kravitz

*Columbia University
Graduate School of Journalism*

LAST JULY 8TH, SABRINA RUBIN Erdely, a writer for ROLLING STONE, telephoned Emily Renda, a rape survivor working on sexual-assault issues as a staff member at the University of Virginia. Erdely said she was searching for a single, emblematic college rape case that would show “what it’s like to be on campus now...where not only is rape so prevalent but also that there’s this pervasive culture of sexual harassment/rape culture,” according to Erdely’s notes of the conversation.

Renda told Erdely that many assaults take place during parties where “the goal is to get everyone blackout

drunk.” Yet “there may be a much darker side of this” at some fraternities, Renda continued. “One girl I worked with closely alleged she was gang-raped in the fall, before rush, and the men who perpetrated it were young guys who were not yet members of the fraternity, and she remembers one of them saying to another... ‘C’mon, man, don’t you want to be a brother?’”

Renda added, “And obviously, maybe her memory of it isn’t perfect.”

Erdely’s notes set down her reply: “I tell her that it’s totally plausible.”

Renda put the writer in touch with a rising junior at UVA who would soon be known to millions of ROLLING STONE readers as “Jackie,” a shortened version of her true first name. Erdely said later that when she first encountered Jackie, she felt the student “had this stamp of credibility” because a university employee had connected them. Earlier that summer, Renda had even appeared before a Senate committee and had referred to Jackie’s allegations during her testimony.

“I’d definitely be interested in sharing my story,” Jackie wrote in an e-mail a few days later.

On July 14th, Erdely phoned her. Jackie launched into a vivid account of a monstrous crime. She said, according to Erdely's notes, that in September 2012, early in her freshman year, a third-year student she knew as a fellow lifeguard at the university's aquatic center had invited her to "my first fraternity party ever." After midnight, her date took her upstairs to a darkened bedroom. "I remember looking at the clock, and it was 12:52 when we got into the room," she told Erdely. Her date shut the door behind them. Jackie continued:

"My eyes were adjusting to the dark. And I said his name and turned around.... I heard voices and I started to scream and someone pummeled into me and told me to shut up. And that's when I tripped and fell against the coffee table and it smashed underneath me.... One of them said, 'Grab its motherfucking leg.' As soon as they said it, I knew they were going to rape me."

The rest of Jackie's account was equally precise and horrifying. The lifeguard coached seven boys as they raped her one by one. Erdely hung up the phone "sickened and shaken," she said. She remembered being "a bit incredulous" about the vividness of some of the details Jackie offered, such as the broken glass from the smashed table. Yet Jackie had been "confident, she was consistent." (Through her lawyer, Jackie declined to respond to questions for this report, saying, "It is in her best interest to remain silent at this time." The quotations attributed to Jackie here come from notes Erdely said she typed contemporaneously or from recorded interviews.)

Between July and October 2014, Erdely said, she interviewed Jackie seven more times. The writer was based in Philadelphia and had been reporting for *ROLLING STONE* since 2008. Will Dana, the magazine's managing editor, considered her "a very thorough and persnickety reporter who's able to navigate extremely difficult stories with a lot of different points of view."

Jackie proved to be a challenging source. At times, she did not respond to Erdely's calls, texts and e-mails. At two points, the reporter feared Jackie might withdraw her cooperation. Also, Jackie refused to provide Erdely the name of the lifeguard who had organized the attack on her. She said she was still afraid of him. *ROLLING STONE*'s editors decided to go ahead without knowing the lifeguard's name or verifying his existence. After that concession, Jackie cooperated fully until publication.

Erdely believed firmly that Jackie's account was reliable. So did her editors and the story's fact-checker, who spent more than four hours on the telephone with Jackie, reviewing every detail of her experience. "She was describing the scene for me in a very vivid way," the checker said. "I did not have doubt." (*ROLLING STONE* requested that the checker not be named because she did not have decision-making authority.)

ROLLING STONE published "A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA" on November 19th, 2014. Online, the story ultimately attracted more than 2.7 mil-

lion views, more than any other feature not about a celebrity that the magazine had ever published.

A week after publication, on the day before Thanksgiving, Erdely spoke by phone with Jackie, who seemed "adrenaline-charged... feeling really good."

Erdely chose this moment to revisit the mystery of the lifeguard who had lured Jackie and had overseen her assault. Jackie's unwillingness to name him continued to bother Erdely. Apparently, the man was still dangerous and at large. "This is not going to be published," the writer said, as she recalled. "Can you just tell me?" Jackie gave Erdely a name. But as the reporter typed, her fingers stopped. Jackie was unsure how to spell the lifeguard's last name. Jackie speculated aloud about possible variations.

"An alarm bell went off in my head," Erdely said. How could Jackie not know the exact name of someone she said had carried out such a terrible crime against her – a man she professed to fear deeply?

Over the next few days, worried about the integrity of her story, the reporter investigated the name Jackie had provided, but she was unable to confirm that he worked at the pool, was a member of Phi Kappa Psi or might have other connections to Jackie or her description of her assault. She discussed her concerns with her editors. She learned that T. Rees Shapiro, a *Washington Post* reporter, was preparing a story based on interviews at the University of Virginia that would raise serious doubts about *ROLLING STONE*'s reporting.

Late on December 4th, Jackie texted Erdely, and the writer called back. It was by now after midnight. "We proceeded to have a conversation that led me to have serious doubts," Erdely said.

She telephoned her principal editor on the story, Sean Woods, and said she had lost confidence in the accuracy of her published description of Jackie's assault. Woods "was just stunned," he said. He "raced into the office" to help decide what to do next. Later that day, the magazine published an editor's note that effectively retracted *ROLLING STONE*'s reporting on Jackie's allegations of gang rape at the University of Virginia. "It was the worst day of my professional life," Woods said.

I. Failure and Its Consequences

ROLLING STONE'S REPUDIATION OF THE main narrative in "A Rape on Campus" is a story of journalistic failure that was avoidable. The magazine's failure encompassed reporting, editing, editorial supervision and fact-checking. The magazine set aside or rationalized as unnecessary essential practices of reporting that, if pursued, would likely have led the magazine's editors to reconsider publishing Jackie's narrative so prominently, if at all. The published story glossed over the gaps in the magazine's reporting by using pseudonyms and by failing to state where important information had come from.

In March, after a four-month investigation, the Charlottesville, Virginia, police department said that it had "exhausted all investigative leads" and had concluded, "There is no substantive basis to support the account alleged in the *ROLLING STONE* article."

The particulars of *ROLLING STONE*'s failure make clear the need for a revitalized consensus in newsrooms old and new about what best journalistic practices entail, at an operating-manual-level of detail. *ROLLING STONE*'s editorial staff has shrunk in recent years, as print advertising revenue has fallen and shifted online. Yet the magazine continues to invest in professional fact-checkers and to fund time-consuming investigations like Erdely's. The failure of "A Rape on Campus" was not due to a lack of resources. The problem was methodology, compounded

About This Story

This story is intended as a work of journalism about a failure of journalism. Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism carried out this fully independent review at *ROLLING STONE*'s request. A longer version is available on the websites of *ROLLING STONE* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Among other things, the complete report includes an explanation of the report's purpose, how it came about and what procedures were agreed to between the magazine and the authors. Sheila Coronel is dean of academic affairs at Columbia School of Journalism. Steve Coll is dean at the school and the author of seven nonfiction books. Derek Kravitz is a post-graduate research scholar at Columbia.

by an environment where journalists with decades of collective experience failed to bring up and debate problems about their reporting or to heed the questions they did receive from a fact-checking colleague.

Erdely and her editors had hoped their investigation would sound an alarm about campus sexual assault and challenge Virginia and other universities to do better. Instead, the magazine's failure may have spread the idea that many women invent rape allegations, an idea belied by crime statistics. "It's going to be more difficult now to engage some people" in improving campus life, said Alex Pinkleton, a UVA student and rape survivor who was one of Erdely's sources.

The university has suffered, as has Phi Kappa Psi, the fraternity Jackie named as the site of her alleged assault. "It's put us in the worst position possible in our community here, in front of our peers and in the classroom," said Stephen Scipione, the chapter president.

Dana, the managing editor, who has worked at *ROLLING STONE* since 1996, said the story's breakdown reflected both an "individual failure" and "procedural failure, an institutional

happened, even accounting for the magazine's sensitivity to Jackie's position. That is mainly a story about reporting and editing.

II. 'How Else Do You Suggest I Find It Out?'

BY THE TIME "ROLLING STONE" EDITORS ASSIGNED an article on campus sexual assault to Erdely in the spring of 2014, numerous reports of campus assault that had been mishandled by universities had generated a wave of student activism. "My original idea," Dana said, was "to look at one of these cases and have the story be more about the process of what happens when an assault is reported and the sort of issues it brings up."

Jackie's story seemed a powerful candidate for such a narrative. Yet once she heard the story, Erdely struggled to decide how much she could independently verify the details Jackie provided

'The editors made judgments about attribution, fact-checking and verification that greatly increased their risks of error but had little to do with protecting Jackie.'

failure.... Every single person at every level of this thing had opportunities to pull the strings a little harder, to question things a little more deeply, and that was not done."

Yet the editors and Erdely have concluded that their main fault was to be too accommodating of Jackie because she described herself as the survivor of a terrible sexual assault. "Ultimately, we were too deferential to our rape victim – we honored too many of her requests in our reporting," Woods said. "We should have been much tougher, and in not doing that, we maybe did her a disservice."

Erdely added, "If this story was going to be about Jackie, I can't think of many things that we would have been able to do differently.... Maybe the discussion should not have been so much about how to accommodate her but should have been about whether she would be in this story at all."

Yet the explanation that *ROLLING STONE* failed because it deferred to a victim cannot adequately account for what went wrong. Erdely's reporting records and interviews with participants make clear that the magazine did not pursue important reporting paths even when Jackie had made no request that they refrain. The editors made judgments about attribution and fact-checking that greatly increased their risks of error but had little or nothing to do with protecting Jackie's position.

There is clearly a need for a more considered understanding about the best practices for reporting on rape survivors, as well as on sexual-assault allegations that have not been adjudicated. This report will suggest ways forward. It will also seek to clarify why *ROLLING STONE*'s failure with "A Rape on Campus" need not have

without jeopardizing Jackie's cooperation. In the end, the reporter relied heavily on Jackie for help in getting access to corroborating evidence and interviews. Erdely asked Jackie for introductions to friends and family. She asked for text messages to confirm parts of Jackie's account, for records from Jackie's employment at the aquatic center, and for health records. She even asked to examine the bloodstained red dress Jackie said she had worn on the night she said she was attacked.

Jackie gave the reporter some help. She provided e-mails from a pool supervisor as evidence of her employment there. She introduced Erdely to Rachel Soltis, a freshman-year suitemate who confirmed that in January 2013, four months after the alleged attack, Jackie had told her that she had been gang-raped.

Yet Jackie could also be hard to pin down. Other interviews Jackie said she would facilitate never materialized. "I felt frustrated, but I didn't think she didn't want to produce" corroboration, Erdely said. Eventually, Jackie told Erdely that her mother had thrown away the red dress. She also said that her mother would be willing to talk to Erdely, but the mother, Erdely said, did not respond to several phone messages.

There were a number of ways that Erdely might have reported further, on her own, to verify what Jackie had told her. Any one of these paths might have led to discoveries that would have caused *ROLLING STONE* to reconsider its plans. But three failures of reporting effort stand out. They involve basic, even routine journalistic practice – not special investigative effort. And if these reporting pathways had been followed, *ROLLING STONE* very likely would have avoided trouble.

Three friends and a 'shit show'

During their first interview, Jackie told Erdely that after she escaped the fraternity where seven men, egged on by her date, had raped her, she called three friends for help.

She described the two young men and one woman – now former friends, she told Erdely – as Ryan, Alex and Kathryn. She gave first names only. She said they met her in the early hours of September 29th, 2012, on the campus grounds. Jackie said she was “crying and crying” at first and that all she could communicate was that “something bad” had happened. She said her friends understood that she had been sexually assaulted. (In interviews for this report, Ryan and Alex said that Jackie told them that she had been forced to perform oral sex on multiple men.) In Jackie’s account to Erdely, Ryan urged her to go to the university women’s center or a hospital for treatment. But Alex and Kathryn worried that if she reported a rape, their social lives would be affected. “She’s going to be the girl who cried ‘rape,’ and we’ll never be allowed into any frat party again,” Jackie remembered Kathryn saying.

The three “were always on my list of people to track down,” Erdely said. She and Woods, her editor, “just kind of agreed.... We just gotta leave it alone.”

If Erdely had reached Ryan Duffin – his true name – he would have said that he had never told Jackie that he would not participate in ROLLING STONE’s “shit show,” Duffin said in an interview for this report. The entire conversation with Ryan that Jackie described to Erdely “never happened,” he said. Jackie had never tried to contact him about cooperating with ROLLING STONE. He hadn’t seen Jackie or communicated with her since the previous April, he said.

If Erdely had learned Ryan’s contention that Jackie had fabricated their conversation, she would have changed course immediately, to research other UVA rape cases free of such contradictions, she said later.

If Erdely had called Kathryn Hendley and Alex Stock – their true names – to check their sides of Jackie’s account of September 28th and 29th, they would have denied saying any of the words Jackie attributed to them (as Ryan would as well). They would have described for Erdely a history of communications

‘There is no evidence in Erdely’s materials or [interview transcripts] that she invented facts. The problem is that she relied on what Jackie told her without vetting its accuracy.’

The scene Jackie painted for ROLLING STONE’s writer was unflattering to all three former friends. Journalistic practice – and basic fairness – require that if a reporter intends to publish derogatory information about anyone, she or he should seek that person’s side of the story. Erdely said she did ask one of Jackie’s friends for help, but never followed up. It should have been possible for Erdely to identify them independently through Facebook or other current students.

Instead, Erdely relied on Jackie. On July 29th, she asked Jackie for help in speaking to Ryan “about corroborating that night, just a second voice?” Jackie answered, according to the writer’s notes, that while “Ryan may be awkward, I don’t understand why he wouldn’t.” But Jackie did not respond to follow-up messages Erdely left.

On September 11th, Erdely traveled to Charlottesville and met Jackie in person for the first time, at a restaurant near the UVA campus. Again the reporter asked about speaking to Ryan. “I did talk to Ryan,” Jackie said. She said she had bumped into him and had asked if he would be interested in talking to ROLLING STONE. Jackie went on to quote Ryan’s reaction: “No!... I’m in a fraternity here, Jackie, I don’t want the Greek system to go down, and it seems like that’s what you want to happen.... I don’t want to be a part of whatever little shit show you’re running.”

“Ryan is obviously out,” Erdely told Jackie a few minutes later.

Yet Jackie never requested – then or later – that ROLLING STONE refrain from contacting Ryan, Kathryn or Alex. Erdely worried, instead, she remembered, that if “I work ‘round Jackie, am I going to drive her from the process?”

with Jackie that would have left the reporter with many new questions. All three would have spoken to Erdely, they said, if they had been contacted.

‘Can you comment?’

Throughout her reporting, Erdely told Jackie and others that she wanted to publish the name of the fraternity where Jackie said she had been raped. Erdely felt Jackie “was secure” about the name of the fraternity: Phi Kappa Psi.

Last October, as she was finishing her story, Erdely e-mailed Stephen Scipione, Phi Kappa Psi’s local chapter president. “I’ve become aware of allegations of gang rape that have been made against the UVA chapter of Phi Kappa Psi,” Erdely wrote. “Can you comment on those allegations?”

Erdely did not provide Scipione the details of the alleged rape, even though Jackie had made no request that ROLLING STONE refrain from doing so. The writer did not reveal that Jackie said Phi Kappa Psi had hosted a “date function” that night, that prospective pledges were present or that the man who allegedly orchestrated the attack was a Phi Kappa Psi member who was also a lifeguard at the university aquatic center.

On October 15th, Scipione responded to Erdely by e-mail: “Even though this allegation is fourth hand and there are no details and no named accuser, the leadership and fraternity as a whole have taken this very seriously.”

Erdely next telephoned Shawn Collinsworth, then Phi Kappa Psi’s national executive director. Collinsworth volunteered a

summary of what UVA had passed on to the fraternity's leaders: that there were allegations of "gang rape during Phi Psi parties" and that one assault "took place in September 2012."

Erdely asked him, according to her notes, "Can you comment?"

Scipione had seemed "really vague," Erdely felt, so she focused on getting a reply from Collinsworth. "I felt that I gave him a full opportunity to respond," she said. "I felt very strongly that he already knew what the allegations were because they'd been told by UVA." As it turned out, however, the version of the attack provided to Phi Kappa Psi was quite different from and less detailed than the one Jackie had provided to Erdely.

If Erdely had provided the full details she possessed instead of asking simply for "comment," the fraternity might have investigated the facts she presented. After *ROLLING STONE* published, Phi Kappa Psi did just that. Scipione said in an interview that a review of the fraternity's social-media archives and bank records showed that the fraternity had held no date function or other party on the night Jackie said she was raped. A comparison of fraternity membership rolls with aquatic-center employment records showed that it had no members who worked as lifeguards, Scipione added. If *ROLLING STONE* had learned this before publishing, Erdely and her editors might have tried to verify Jackie's account more thoroughly.

The mystery of 'Drew'

In her interviews, Jackie freely used a first name – but no last name – of the lifeguard she said had orchestrated her rape. On September 16th, for the first time, Erdely raised the possibility of tracking this man down.

"Any idea what he's up to now?" Erdely asked, according to her notes.

"No, I just know he's graduated," Jackie said.

"How would you feel if I reached out to him for a comment?" Erdely asked, her notes record.

"I'm not sure I would be comfortable with that."

That exchange inaugurated a six-week struggle between Erdely and Jackie. For a while, it seemed as if the stalemate might cause Jackie to withdraw from cooperation altogether.

On October 20th, Erdely asked again for the man's last name. "I'm not going to use his name in the article, but I have to do my due diligence anyway," Erdely told Jackie, according to the writer's notes. "I imagine he's going to say nothing, but it's something I need to do."

"I don't want to give his last name," Jackie replied. "I don't even want to get him involved in this.... He completely terrifies me. I've never been so scared of a person in my entire life, and I've never wanted to tell anybody his last name.... I guess part of me was thinking that he'd never even know about the article."

"Of course he's going to know about the article," Erdely said. "He's going to read it. He probably knows about the article already."

Jackie sounded shocked, according to Erdely's notes. "I don't want to be the one to give you the name," Jackie said.

"How else do you suggest I find it out?"

"I guess you could ask Phi Psi for their list," Jackie suggested.

After this conversation, Jackie stopped responding to Erdely's calls and messages. Yet Jackie made no demand that *ROLLING STONE* not try to identify the lifeguard independently. She even suggested a way to do so: by checking the fraternity's roster. Nor did she condition her participation in the story on Erdely agreeing not to try to identify the lifeguard.

Erdely did try to identify the man on her own, unsuccessfully. By October's end, with the story scheduled for closing in just two weeks, Jackie was still refusing to answer Erdely's texts and voicemails. Finally, on November 3rd, after consulting with her editors, Erdely left a message for Jackie proposing to her a "solution" that would allow *ROLLING STONE* to avoid contacting

the lifeguard after all. The magazine would use a pseudonym – "Drew" was eventually chosen.

After Erdely left this capitulating voicemail, Jackie called back quickly. She now chatted freely about the lifeguard, still without using his last name. From that point on, Jackie cooperated fully.

There was, in fact, an aquatic-center lifeguard who had worked at the pool the same time as Jackie and had the first name she had given to *ROLLING STONE*. He was not a member of Phi Kappa Psi, however. The police found no evidence to link him to Jackie's assault.

If *ROLLING STONE* had located him and heard his response, including the verifiable fact that he did not belong to Phi Kappa Psi, the man's statements might have led Erdely to reconsider her focus on that case.

III. 'What Are They Hiding?'

ERDELY'S CHOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF Virginia as a case study was well timed. The week she visited campus, an 18-year-old UVA sophomore went missing and was later found to have been abducted and killed. The university had by then endured a number of highly visible sexual-assault cases.

After she heard Jackie's story, Erdely zeroed in on the obligation of universities under federal law to issue timely warnings when there is a "serious or continuing" threat to public safety. Erdely understood from Jackie that eight months after the alleged assault, she had reported to UVA about being gang-raped at the Phi Kappa Psi house in what appeared to be a hazing ritual. The university, *ROLLING STONE* reported in its published story, was remiss in not warning its students about this apparently predatory fraternity.

On May 20th, 2013, Jackie did meet with Nicole Eramo, the assistant dean of students, according to the Charlottesville police. Jackie described her assault differently than she did later for Erdely, the police recounted, but they declined to provide further detail. Members of the UVA community knowledgeable about the case who asked not to be identified in order to speak about confidential university matters said that Jackie told Eramo she was forced to have oral sex with several men while at a fraternity party on Madison Lane. She did not name a fraternity or provide names or details about her attackers, these sources said. No mention was made of hazing. (Citing student privacy and ongoing investigations, the UVA administration, through its communications office, declined to answer questions about the case.)

As *ROLLING STONE* reported, at their May 2013 meeting, Eramo presented Jackie her options: reporting the assault to the police or to the university's Sexual Misconduct Board. The dean also offered counseling and other services. She checked with Jackie in succeeding weeks to see whether she wanted to take action.

The university decided not to issue a warning at this point in time because Jackie did not file a formal complaint and her account did not include the names of assailants or a specific fraternity. It also made no mention of hazing, according to the UVA sources.

On April 21st, 2014, Jackie again met with Eramo. She told the dean that she was now coming under pressure for her visible activism on campus with assault-prevention groups such as Take Back the Night. Three weeks earlier, she told Eramo, she had been hit in the face by a bottle thrown by hecklers outside a Charlottesville bar. She also added a new piece of information to her earlier account of the gang rape she had endured. She named the fraternity where the assault had taken place as Phi Kappa Psi. Moreover, she mentioned to Eramo two other students who she said had been raped at that fraternity. But she did

not reveal the names of these women or any details about their assaults, UVA sources said.

When there is credible information about multiple acts of sexual violence by the same perpetrator that may put students at risk, Department of Education guidelines indicate that the university should take action even when no formal complaint has been filed. The school should also consider whether to issue a public-safety warning. Once more, UVA did not issue a warning. The university's administrators concluded that a warning might endanger Jackie, according to UVA sources familiar with their decision-making. Whether the administration nonetheless should have issued a warning given the information it then possessed is a question under review by the University of Virginia's governing Board of Visitors. (In late March, the university updated its sexual-assault policy to include clearer procedures around warnings.)

On April 22nd, Eramo arranged a meeting for Jackie with the Charlottesville police. Jackie reported both the bottle-throwing incident and her assault at the Phi Kappa Psi house. The police later said she declined to provide details about her rape because "she feared retaliation from the fraternity if she followed through with a criminal investigation."

In early September, Erdely asked to interview Eramo for *ROLLING STONE*. The dean was willing to talk if she wasn't asked about specific cases, but about hypothetical situations, as Erdely had cleverly suggested as a way around student-privacy limitations. The communications office endorsed the interview, but Vice President Patricia Lampkin vetoed the idea. Lampkin said she felt that given privacy restrictions, there was nothing Eramo could say in an interview that would give Erdely "a full and balanced view of the situation."

"I had actually gone to campus thinking that they were going to be very helpful," Erdely recalled. Now she felt she was being stonewalled. To Erdely, UVA looked as if it was in damage-control mode. "So I think that instead of being skeptical of Jackie," she said, "I became skeptical of UVA.... What are they hiding and why are they acting this way?"

On October 2nd, Erdely interviewed UVA President Teresa Sullivan. The reporter asked probing questions that revealed the gap between the number of assault cases that the university reported publicly and the cases brought to the university's attention internally. Erdely asked about allegations of gang rapes at Phi Kappa Psi. Sullivan said that a fraternity was under investigation but declined to comment about specific cases.

UVA "took no action to warn the campus that an allegation of gang rape had been made against an active fraternity," Erdely wrote in her published story. Overall, she wrote, "rapes are kept quiet" at UVA in part because of "an administration that critics say is less concerned with protecting students than it is with protecting its own reputation from scandal."

During the six months she worked on the story, Erdely concentrated her reporting on the perspectives of victims of sexual violence. She was moved by their experiences and diverse frustrations. Her access to the perspectives of UVA administrators was much more limited, in part because many of them were not permitted to speak with her, but also because Erdely came to see them as adversaries.

During interviews for this report, Erdely continued to defend her reporting about UVA as fair and accurate. But in the view of some of her sources, the portrait she created was unfair and mistaken. "The university's response is not, 'We don't care,'" said Pinkleton, Jackie's confidante and an assault survivor. In an e-mail provided by her lawyers, Eramo wrote that the article falsely attributes to her statements she never made and "trivializes the complexities of providing trauma-informed support to survivors and the real difficulties inherent in balancing respect for the wishes of survivors while also providing for the safety of our communities."

IV. The Editing: 'I Wish Somebody Had Pushed Me Harder'

S EAN WOODS, ERDELY'S PRIMARY EDITOR, might have prevented the effective retraction of Jackie's account by pressing his writer to close the gaps in her reporting. Investigative reporters working on difficult, emotive or contentious stories often have blind spots. It is up to their editors to insist on more phone calls, more travel, more time, until the reporting is complete. Woods did not do enough.

ROLLING STONE editor and publisher Jann Wenner said he typically reads about half of the stories in each issue before publication. He read a draft of Erdely's narrative and found Jackie's case "extremely strong, powerful, provocative.... I thought we had something really good there." But Wenner leaves the detailed editing to managing editor Will Dana. Dana might have looked more deeply into the story drafts he read, spotted the reporting gaps and insisted that they be fixed. He did not. "It's on me," Dana said. "I'm responsible."

Erdely said that as she was preparing to write her first draft, she talked with Woods about her failure to contact the three friends who spoke with Jackie on the night she said she was raped. "Sean advised me that for now we should just put this aside," she said. "He actually suggested that I change their names for now." Woods said he intended his decision to be temporary, pending further reporting and review.

Erdely used pseudonyms in her first draft: "Randall," "Cindy" and "Andrew." She relied solely on Jackie's information and wrote vividly about how the three friends had reacted after finding Jackie shaken and weeping in the first hours of September 29th:

"The group looked at each other in a panic.... 'We have to get her to the hospital,' Randall declared. The other two friends, however, weren't convinced. 'Is that such a good idea?' countered Cindy.... 'Her reputation will be *shot* for the next four years.'... The three friends launched into a heated discussion about the social price of reporting Jackie's rape, while Jackie stood behind them, mute in her bloody dress."

Erdely inserted a note in her draft, in bold type: "she says – all her POV" – to indicate to her editors that the dialogue had come only from Jackie.

"In retrospect, I wish somebody had pushed me harder" about reaching out to the three for their versions, Erdely said. "I guess maybe I was surprised that nobody said, 'Why haven't you called them?'"

After he read the first draft, Woods recalled, "I asked Sabrina to go reach" the three friends. "She said she couldn't.... I did repeatedly ask, 'Can we reach these people? Can we?' And I was told no." He accepted this because "I felt we had enough."

Woods said he ultimately approved pseudonyms because he didn't want to embarrass the three students. "I wanted to protect them," he said.

Dana said he did not remember talking with Woods or Erdely about the three friends at all.

'I had a faith'

It is not possible in journalism to reach every source a reporter or editor might wish. A solution is to be transparent with readers about what is known or unknown at the time of publication.

ROLLING STONE's editors did not make clear to readers that Erdely and her editors did not know "Drew's" true name, had not talked to him and had been unable to verify that he existed.

That was fundamental to readers' understanding. In one draft of the story, Erdely did include a disclosure. She wrote that Jackie "refuses to divulge [Drew's] full name to RS," because she is "gripped by fears she can barely articulate." Woods cut that passage as he was editing. He "debated adding it back in" but ultimately chose not to.

Woods also allowed the "shit show" quote from "Randall" into the story without making it clear that it had come from Jackie and that he had not been contacted.

If anyone had raised doubts during the editing process about how verifiable Jackie's narrative was, the story she told could have been summarized "in a paragraph deep in the story," Dana said. As to the apparent gaps in reporting, attribution and verification that had accumulated in the story's drafts, Dana said, "I had a faith that as it went through the fact-checking that all this was going to be straightened out." No such doubts came to his attention, he said.

The fact-checker assigned to "A Rape on Campus" had been checking stories as a freelancer for about three years and had been on staff for one and a half years. She relied heavily

including, and maybe especially, myself – can make grave errors in judgment."

Yet ROLLING STONE's senior editors are unanimous in the belief that the story's failure does not require them to change their editorial systems. "It's not like I think we need to overhaul our process, and I don't think we need to necessarily institute a lot of new ways of doing things," Dana said. "We just have to do what we've always done and just make sure we don't make this mistake again." McPherson said, "I 100 percent do not think that the policies that we have in place failed. I think decisions were made around those because of the subject matter."

Yet stronger policy and clearer staff understanding in at least three areas might well have prevented the magazine's errors:

Pseudonyms. Pseudonyms ask readers to trust that this is the only instance in which a publication is inventing details. Their use in this case was a crutch – it allowed the magazine to evade coming to terms with reporting gaps. ROLLING STONE should consider banning pseudonyms or using them much more rarely.

Checking Derogatory Information. Erdely and Woods made the fateful agreement not to check with the three friends.

'Erdely's access to administrators at UVA was limited, in part because many were not permitted to speak with her, but also because she began to see them as adversaries.'

on Jackie, as Erdely had done. The checker did try to improve the story's reporting and attribution of quotations concerning the three friends. She marked on a draft that Ryan – "Randall" under pseudonym – had not been interviewed, and that his "shit show" quote had originated with Jackie. "Put this on Jackie?" the checker wrote. "Any way we can confirm with him?" She said she talked about this problem of clarity with Woods and Erdely. "I pushed.... They came to the conclusion that they were comfortable" with not making it clear to readers that they had never contacted Ryan.

Coco McPherson, head of the fact-checking department, read the final draft. She said later that she had faith in everyone involved and didn't see the need to raise any issues with the editors. "These decisions not to reach out to these people were made by editors above my pay grade," she said.

V. Looking Forward

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE IN ERDELY'S MATERIALS or from interviews with her subjects that she invented facts; the problem was that she relied on what Jackie told her without vetting its accuracy.

"It's been an extraordinarily painful and humbling experience," Woods said. "I've learned that even the most trusted and experienced people –

If the fact-checking department had understood that such a practice was unacceptable, the outcome would almost certainly have changed.

Confronting Subjects With Details. When Erdely sought "comment," she missed the opportunity to hear challenging, detailed rebuttals from Phi Kappa Psi or UVA before publication. If she and the fact-checker had understood that by policy they should routinely share the specific, derogatory details they possessed with the subjects of their reporting, ROLLING STONE might have veered in a different direction.

Because questioning a victim's account can be traumatic, counselors have cautioned journalists to allow survivors some control over their own stories. Yet problems arise when the terms of the compact between survivor and journalist are not spelled out. Kristen Lombardi, who spent a year and a half reporting the Center for Public Integrity's series on campus sexual assault, said she made it explicit to the women she interviewed that the reporting process required her to obtain documents, collect evidence and talk to as many people involved in the case as possible, including the accused. She prefaced her interviews by assuring the women she believed them but that verification was in their best interests. If a woman was not ready for such a process, Lombardi said, she was prepared to walk away from the story.

The responsibilities that universities have in preventing campus sexual assault – and the standards of performance they should be held to – are important questions of public interest. ROLLING STONE was right to take them on. The pattern of its failure draws a map of how to do better.

How a band of hard-partying teenage wrestlers from Florida cashed in on an epidemic and built a multimillion-dollar OxyContin smuggling ring

T

HE GUTTED TEDDY BEARS WERE TOSSED everywhere, the slit carcasses and polyester innards strewn on the floor and kitchen table along with tens of thousands of dollars in fifties and hundreds – stacks of notes being tallied in an automatic money counter. On the table, there was a Glock .45, a Remington .308 sniper rifle, and scores of pharmaceutical vials containing thousands of opiate pills. ■ Standing at the threshold of a luxury condo in Tampa, Florida, Doug

Dodd looked on in horror at the spectacle of a drug dealer's den of inequity. Dodd was only 19, a student taking business courses at a local community college – when he wasn't busy being a big-time narcotics trafficker – but he could see the obvious: His best friend was out of control. ■ “What the fuck are you doing?” Dodd shouted, pointing at one of their high school friends sitting at the table. “What’s he doing here?” Lance Barabas looked up in surprise from counting the money, clearly stoned out of his mind. This was bad, Dodd knew – very, very bad. It was the summer of 2008, and for the past year, every month Dodd and Barabas were illegally moving an average of 20,000 OxyContin and Roxicodone

OXY-GEN

By 18, Doug Dodd (right) was supplying thousands of pills that his wrestling team buddy Lance Barabas (far right) sent across the country. “Minimum risk, maximum profit,” Dodd recalls. “It was so sweet.”



THE DUKES



OF OXY

BY GUY LAWSON

pills to a network of dealers spread across the country – Tennessee, Alaska, South Carolina, New York. The two kids and their crew were making millions of dollars, but the business was overwhelming them. The teddy bears were how they transported cash, instructing their out-of-state dealers to cut open the bellies of the toys and stuff them with thousands of dollars and then ship them back to Florida by FedEx or UPS. The teddy-bear operation was supposed to be top secret, known only to their inner circle, but now an old high school buddy of theirs was sitting at the table watching Barabas add up the money – incredibly risky and stupid exposure, Dodd believed. At that moment, Dodd was carrying thousands of oxycodone pills – more than enough for a 25-year mandatory minimum sentence in Florida. But Barabas didn't seem to care about security or rudimentary precautions.

"You're just being paranoid," Barabas said, gesturing to their friend. "He's all right."

"You're going to get us busted," Dodd said, clearly frustrated, dropping his load

lap dances to prove what a big-shot drug dealer he was. Crazy shit, Dodd thought – the kind of behavior that was destined to end with them in handcuffs.

"We were both hooked on our product," Dodd recalls today. "We were high all the time and making bad decisions. But I was afraid of getting busted. Not the Little General – he had to do things his way. There was no talking to him. He was brazen. He wanted to be the new Scarface – only the white-kid version."

The Little General's behavior was increasingly erratic, like the day he walked into a car dealership in Tampa and bought a tricked-out red pickup – entirely in cash. The salesman looked on in disbelief as the kid peeled off \$25,000 in fifties and hundreds, forming tidy stacks on the desk.

"So you're in a cash business?" the salesman asked. "Y'all male strippers?"

The Little General grinned. "Something like that," he said.

On the way home, he told Dodd he wanted to get personalized plates for the truck saying OXY 80s – the name of their favorite and most popular pill. Even though the friends had no visible means

Evenings, Dodd and the Little General often sat on the balcony overlooking the trendy strip, getting drunk or stoned – usually both. Barabas used the time as an opportunity to have a little fun.

"Lance had a laser sight on his AR-15 rifle," Dodd recalls. "He'd target people walking along the street. Couples would be minding their own business having a nice stroll, and suddenly a red dot would appear on their chest. Most of the time they didn't know it. But a lot of times it would freak them out. Some people would scream – Lance loved that. They'd look up and search to see where the laser was coming from – Lance loved that too. And he was doing this when he knew perfectly well that he had \$40,000 in cash and thousands of pills in his apartment if the police came knocking."

"Yes, I did point the laser at people," Barabas allows in an e-mail from prison. "But the gun was never loaded. I was crazy, but I wasn't stupid."

PRISONERS PITCH ME THEIR stories from time to time. But I've never before reported an article based on the manuscript of a tale written by a convicted drug dealer and a major mortgage fraud mastermind, both inmates in a federal facility in Florida. A while back, Doug Dodd and his prison writing partner, Matthew Cox, sent me a document titled "Oxy Rush: From High School Wrestlers to Oxycodone Kingpins," asking if I might be interested in writing about the story. Dodd was serving 80 months for trafficking illegal prescription drugs and money laundering. Cox was doing 26 years for a massive fraud he'd committed by originating fake mortgages and stealing the proceeds. The hundred or so pages they'd written were printed in the form of prison-issue e-mails, with inmate numbers stamped at the top.

I read the description of Dodd's adventures as a teenage drug dealer, and the story described a universe I didn't know existed, the half-crazy swirl of a gang of high school wrestling buddies who turned themselves into an extremely unlikely organized-crime enterprise. There was a certain kind of charm to Dodd and his pals, even as they broke the law with abandon. Mostly I liked Dodd's voice: He was a maniac, but he was also smart and observant. He was like a pill-pusher version of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, it seemed to me, or the mobster Henry Hill in *GoodFellas*: an insider whose descent into the chaos and collapse of a major criminal conspiracy offered a window into an amazing underworld. So I checked out Dodd's tale – court records, DEA files, press clippings, interviews with two of his co-conspirators. And the story lined up: What follows is his account.

THE CREW WAS MOVING 20,000 PILLS A MONTH OUT OF FLORIDA AND WAS GETTING SENT BACK TEDDY BEARS STUFFED WITH CASH.

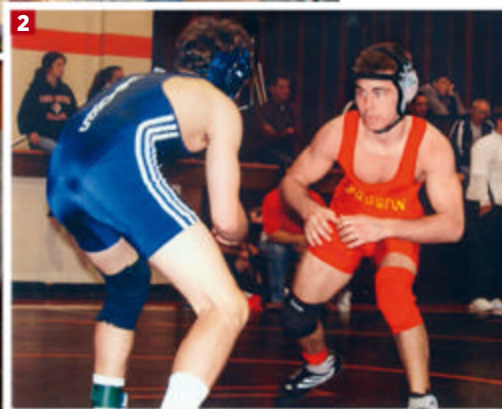
of pills and walking toward the door.

Dodd was beginning to despair of his best friend – known as the Little General for his short stature and Napoleonic tendencies. They'd wrestled together in high school for the Hudson Cobras, both bantam-size balls of muscle, with short hair gelled upward and a punkish attitude. They loved each other like brothers. But the Little General was getting more and more reckless. When they were out on business calls, he'd flash his Glock and threaten to kill anyone who crossed him. When they hit strip clubs, he'd dropped 2,000 bucks buying everyone drinks and

of supporting such an extravagant lifestyle, the Little General rented an upscale loft in a fashionable district by the water. His neighbor was the head coach of the NFL's Buccaneers. For his part, Dodd tried to deflect the attention of law enforcement: He still lived with his grandmother in a tiny house in a crime-ridden neighborhood called the Swamp.

The Little General's bachelor pad had floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the water, and a marble bathroom. He routinely threw *Blow*-style parties, circulating cocaine on silver platters and goblets filled with pain pills to be crushed and snorted. He and Dodd invited dozens of sorority girls to their parties. The Little General would spread tens of thousands of dollars in fifties on his king-size bed and let the girls post selfies in their underwear swimming in cash, or holding one of his rifles.

Contributing editor GUY LAWSON's new book, "Arms and the Dudes," based on his 2011 ROLLING STONE story, will be released in June, and a movie version starring Jonah Hill and Miles Teller will hit screens in 2016.



TEENAGE KINGPINS

(1) Sullivan, Landon, Dodd and Lance (from left), 2009. Dodd, who was first arrested for pot at 13, became a wrestler in high school (2) before starting a cross-country drug-dealing ring (3).

"I was born in 1988, at the end of the Reagan era," Dodd tells me via prison e-mail. "Growing up, virtually everyone around me was selling drugs or doing them. Family, friends, everybody was getting high or making money from it – or both.

"I started smoking pot around 12," Dodd says. "There was something about lighting a bowl and sucking in the smoke – the arti-

ficial sense of serenity. In the sixth grade, I thought it would be fun to smoke up on the school bus. I thought I was so cool pulling out my pipe – it never occurred to me that another student would rat me out. That time, the school called the police."

Taken to the Pasco County juvenile holding center outside Tampa, the 13-year-old Dodd was fingerprinted, and his mug shot was taken for the first time.

The police called his father, who came to collect him with a heavy sigh. Dodd's parents were divorced, and he knew his mother wouldn't do much. But Dodd's father admonished his son to make better choices in life.

"It was hard to take advice from my father seriously, given the mistakes he'd made in his own life," Dodd wrote. "He was constantly getting caught nailing the waitresses at the restaurants he managed – he found three wives that way. Between my father's affinity for waitresses and my mother's taste for cold beer, their marriage was always doomed."

Growing up poor in hardscrabble towns outside Tampa – working-class neighborhoods of trailer parks, muscle cars and fast-food joints – Dodd ran with a gang of older, tougher kids. With his parents working long hours, Dodd was left to fend for himself and dealt weed in high school to earn pocket money. He also worked nights as a fry cook at joints like Mike's Dockside and Hooters. Which was how his drug-slugging venture really began – to be precise, on the evening of February 10th, 2006. That night, Dodd finished a shift at his crappy seven-bucks-an-hour job. Exhausted by school, wrestling practice, homework and then work, he got in

his beater Honda Prelude and lit a blunt. As he drove home, Dodd forgot to turn on his headlights and was pulled over by a cop, who searched the car and found a bag with half an ounce of marijuana.

"You're going to end up in fucking prison!" Dodd recalls his mother screaming when he told her what had happened. "You little idiot."

Dodd didn't like his mother much – she had a bad temper; he says she

wrote a letter to the judge saying her son was out of control and she desperately needed help with him. Charged with possession, Dodd pleaded no contest and was sentenced to nine months probation. He was required to undergo drug treatment, and was subject to a curfew that meant he had to go straight home after school. The confinement was torture: He couldn't hang out with his homeboys from the wrestling team – the Little General, Pretty Boy, Sully. He couldn't party. He couldn't deal weed, so he had no money.

Depressed, the 17-year-old Dodd started spending afternoons with an older cousin – a bodybuilder with a fondness for steroids and a hair-trigger temper who'd started to abuse prescription painkillers. Bored, Dodd began to pop the opiates too.

"We spent our time watching Ultimate Fighting Championship getting fucked up

on pain pills,” Dodd says. “My first time was actually Roxicodone, a milder opiate designed for breakthrough pain. It wasn’t a sensational high, like Ecstasy or acid. It gives you a chill, body-buzzed kind of feeling. Pretty soon I was snorting pills every day – they were stronger that way.”

Like millions of American teenagers, Dodd had discovered the pleasures of an opioid developed in Germany in 1916 that had been turned into a multibillion-dollar industry in the United States as pharmaceutical companies marketed a synthetic drug designed to treat chronic and severe pain – but that could be repurposed into a recreational high by crushing the pill to disable the time-release mechanism. Hill-billy heroin, as it was called, was pioneered in poor white communities in the Appalachian Mountains in the mid-Nineties. By the middle of the 2000s, oxycodone was a national health crisis, as thousands of people died of overdoses and millions became severely addicted.

The economics of pain pills were very different from other illegal substances. The supply chain ran throughout the pharmaceutical industry: Clinics known as pill mills handed out prescriptions to patients with little or no attempt to diagnose an underlying pain condition. Pharmacies gladly profited as they filled countless prescriptions, leading drug companies to manufacture far more medication than was legitimately needed, in order to meet the demand.

Nowhere was the epidemic more intense than in Florida, along the Redneck Riviera, where Dodd lived. Florida’s laws didn’t require the state to keep a database of prescriptions, so it was exceedingly easy for a patient to see three, four, five, 10, 20 different doctors. Physicians in Florida reportedly wrote *10 times* as many prescriptions for pain medication as every other state in the country combined. The statistic begged belief. The only logical explanation for the vast disparity was that the medical-industrial complex in Florida was complicit in the epidemic.

Law enforcement and legislation struggled to keep up with the burgeoning pill epidemic. The state’s response was to impose onerous mandatory minimum sentences for possessing or dealing the pills – even while the medical industry profited from the trade, hypocrisy that didn’t escape the notice of the teenager Dodd.

His pill habit growing, Dodd began to consider the idea of selling the painkillers himself: Oxy and roxie were basically

semi-legal, he figured, and they were definitely abundant and popular. Dodd’s cousin put him in touch with a potbellied biker willing to sell him a hundred 30-milligram Roxicodones for \$8 each. Three days later, Dodd had sold them all for \$12 apiece, netting a quick \$400. The working-class crowd he ran with was happy to buy as many as he could get, it seemed.

As a pot dealer, Dodd had displayed a talent for sourcing a supply and maintaining discipline in his distribution, always prizing caution. He was half-Irish, half-Italian, with criminal histories on both sides of his family, so he’d been schooled in the risks involved in breaking the law. Moreover, his life of poverty had rendered him obsessed with making enough money

he bought a pearl-white SUV. But the accumulation of cash was worrying him, so Dodd says he turned to a close relative – a longtime gangster freshly out of prison after serving several years for dealing drugs – for guidance on managing money as a drug dealer.

“Rule number two,” his gangster relative said. “Don’t ever keep all your money in one place.”

“You have rules for dealing drugs?” Dodd asked.

“Rule number five: Never deal with anyone you don’t know.”

“What’s number three?”

“Never talk business on the phone.”

“Rule 10?”

“Don’t use guns, and don’t deal with people who do.”

“Seven?”

“Don’t ever keep your product at your house.”

“Eight?”

“Cease all contact with anyone under state or federal investigation.”

Dodd asked if he could have a copy of all these rules.

“Rule number 20: Never write anything down.”



HARD TIME

Sullivan, Landon and Dodd (from left) were all housed in Coleman prison. “The biggest lesson I learned was simple,” says Dodd now. “Don’t sell oxy.”

to escape the trailer parks in the Swamp. Encouraged by his early success, Dodd started to buy the pills from people with prescriptions for more than they needed.

“It was too easy,” Dodd recalls. “One buddy connected me with a married couple that had prescriptions. Another hooked me up with some folks he knew, plus there was a guy who I’d met at a drug rehab center who knew people with scripts. Before long I had 2,000 pills coming in every month. I was buying the pills for eight bucks and selling for 15 – or a 10-pack for \$120. I could make at least five grand in a month.”

By the time his probation was over, Dodd had \$50,000 sitting in a safe, and

DODD HAD ALWAYS been the poorest kid in his gang, a grim reality that had made him more than a little jealous of his friends.

Lance Barabas – the Little General – and his older brother Landon, known as Pretty Boy because of his excessive vanity, were “redneck rich,” it seemed to Dodd: Their mother ran a homeless shelter called Holy Ground, and they lived in an upmarket double-wide trailer out back. The Little General and Pretty Boy drove new pickup trucks, and they always had pocket money and the comfort of knowing they could afford to go to college. The other member

of their inner circle, Richard Sullivan – Sully for short – was also well-to-do, at least compared to Dodd’s broken and broke family.

“I had a chip on my shoulder,” Dodd tells me. “I wasn’t a spoiled little shit like my friends. I’d learned that you can’t rely on anyone else. I’d lived in some of the most disgusting places: trailers with holes in the roof, sinking floors and fleas all over. My attitude was to say ‘fuck it’ when I started to deal pills – I was on my own, and I was going to live with no room for error. I figured I would deal pills long enough to make enough money to go to college and start a business, and then I’d be on my way, never looking back.”

Now flush with cash, Dodd would get together with his teenage buddies on the weekends. They'd empty the furniture out of a trailer and turn it into a wrestling cage. A hundred high school students would whoop and holler and get drunk on "hunch punch" – flavored vodka, Everclear, Kool-Aid and cut-up fruit mixed in a 10-gallon container – as they cheered on the wrestlers pulling double-leg takedowns, body slams, rear-naked chokes. They'd light bonfires and drop Ecstasy and make out with cheerleaders until the cops rolled up.

The Hudson Cobras weren't a particularly good wrestling squad, but there was a strong sense of team spirit – and at least among friends, an appetite for illegal substances. Both Dodd and the Little General wrestled at 125 pounds and were constant sparring partners, practicing bear hugs, headlocks, arm drags, every day after school.

"Wrestling is the sport of all sports," Dodd tells me. "It's a warrior sport. Blood, sweat, tears – it's got everything. You don't rely on anyone else. I've always been self-reliant, I guess because I was left alone so much as a kid."

As an act of camaraderie, Dodd shared his stockpile of oxys and roxies with his buddies. The Little General loved the drug from the get-go – "from the rip," in Dodd's words. What began as pleasure became an addiction, and soon Lance Barabas couldn't keep up with the cost of his burgeoning habit. To help his friend finance his usage, Dodd fronted Barabas a hundred pills a week, so he could deal them and fund his habit with the profits.

In the spring of 2007, Dodd graduated high school with honors. He walked across the stage, searching the crowd for his mother's face – she didn't come – and waving to his wrestling buddies as they laughed and waved.

"Of course, I was fucked up on roxies," Dodd recalls. "Even though my mom wasn't there, I felt great that day. I knew that we had a good thing going with the pills. I figured we were headed for the top."

Dodd was right – at least for a while. One afternoon during the summer of 2007, Dodd and the Little General were at the beach in Clearwater, playing volleyball, listening to tunes, popping pills – 30mg roxies, or "blueberries," as they called them because of the color of the tablet. They'd set up a "personal party tent" on the beach to attract girls. The Little General's older brother Pretty Boy was back in town, on summer break, another Hudson graduate, who'd won a scholarship to wrestle at Cumberland University in Tennessee. To get the party rolling, Dodd handed Pretty Boy a couple of complimentary blueberries.

"You know these things go for a dollar a milligram up in Tennessee," Pretty Boy

said, snorting the pill. "That's 30 bucks for one blueberry."

"You serious?" Dodd asked.

"Dead serious."

Dodd and the Little General caught each other's gaze, the same thought traveling through their minds. The money Pretty Boy was talking about in Tennessee – 30 bucks for 30 milligrams of oxycodone – was insane.

"You think you could sell some of them blueberries up there?" the Little General asked his big brother.

"Fuck yeah," Pretty Boy said. "My buddy Justin will get rid of them for me."

Pretty Boy told them that there was huge demand for the pills – wrestlers, football players, students looking to get

apiece, and sold by Landon for \$18 apiece, resulted in a profit of \$5,500.

"I'll split the profit with you," Barabas whispered.

In the parking lot after class, Dodd told the Little General that he'd get him the pills by nightfall. "But I ain't driving them up to Tennessee," Dodd said.

"Don't worry, I'm going to send them FedEx," Barabas said.

Dodd didn't think that was a good idea: Electronic sniffers and X-ray scans monitored couriered packages for drugs, and they could easily be caught. But the Little General insisted – and when he wanted something, he was unstoppable. Once Dodd amassed the pills, the pair went to a GNC store to prepare their shipment.

"WE WERE EASILY CLEARING 40 GRAND A MONTH," DODD RECALLS. "THAT'S A LOT OF TEDDY BEARS."

high. He said people from Tennessee drove down to Florida to get prescriptions because it was so much easier to persuade doctors there to write scripts – and because the state didn't have a medication register, like Tennessee and most other states.

The problem was so vast and well-known, Interstate 75 was commonly referred to as the "Oxy Express."

"They love hillbilly heroin up there," Pretty Boy told them.

At the start of the fall semester, Dodd fronted Pretty Boy 200 blueberries when he went back to Tennessee. A few days later, Pretty Boy called to say he'd sold all of the pills for \$4,000. This was big news: Dodd had purchased the drugs for \$8, and Pretty Boy had sold them all in one shot for \$20 each. They'd more than doubled their money in a matter of days.

That fall, Dodd and Barabas were enrolled in business-management courses at Pasco-Hernando Community College. One morning in class, as the professor reviewed the syllabus for introductory economics, the Little General couldn't stop talking about the potential to sell pain pills through his brother in Tennessee.

"This is huge," Barabas whispered to Dodd. "Have you done the numbers?"

Dodd hushed his friend. He'd done the numbers. A shipment of 500 blueberries, purchased at a bulk-discount rate of \$7

They bought the makings of a care package a mother might send a wrestler away at college: protein bars, vitamin supplements, muscle magazines. They emptied the vitamin bottles and stuffed them with 500 roxie 30mgs and carefully resealed the plastic caps with clear glue. They sent the package by FedEx, following the tracking number to its safe arrival at Pretty Boy's PO box at college.

The pills sold for 10 grand, says Dodd – all to Pretty Boy's friend Justin. The next week, Pretty Boy said he wanted 1,000 pills. Then he wanted 1,500. Then 2,000 – and that was more than Dodd and the Little General could get. With all the cash coming in, Pretty Boy needed to figure a way to safely ship it down to Florida to fund more purchases. To hide the money, Pretty Boy went to Wal-Mart and bought a teddy bear. He took the bear home, removed the stuffing, and filled the innards with \$10,000 in cash. The teddy bear arrived by FedEx the next day, followed by another and then another.

"We were easily clearing 40 grand a month," Dodd recalls. "That's a lot of teddy bears."

The business model was pure genius, he believed. They were sending the pills to one person out of state, and all the legwork was being done in Tennessee. The biggest risk in dealing drugs always involved the number of people you had to interact with.

"Minimum risk, maximum profit," Dodd recalls. "It was so sweet."

AS THEIR SUCCESSES MOUNTED, the Little General began to entertain the idea of putting together a real organization. He wanted a group of associates to help them collect scripts, so they could ship more pills to Tennessee. The price difference between the two states – the arbitrage – was just too attractive not to exploit to the greatest extent possible. He talked openly about becoming a teenage kingpin with a network of dealers throughout the country.

"We need a tight group," Barabas said. "People we can trust. Guys like us."

Dodd didn't share his friend's grandiose ambitions. The pair were a study in opposites: Dodd was careful, canny, acutely aware of the trouble they'd face if they were busted; Barabas was cocky, pig-headed, greedy. Dodd wanted to save a half million – enough for college and his first home, he

bottles stuffed with pills and receiving teddy bears crammed with cash in return.

Their main connection in Tennessee was a college wrestler named Justin Knox, a well-to-do student who'd turned himself into a five-eight, 200-pound gnarl of muscle.

In the winter of 2007, Dodd says Knox drove his new yellow Hummer down the Oxy Express to party with the Little General and Dodd and to propose a new initiative. As Dodd and the Little General snorted pain pills, Knox said he was happy with the business they were doing, but according to Dodd, he wanted to up the stakes.

"Oxy is where the money's at," said Knox. "I can move 10,000 pills a month easy."

"We'll figure something out," the Little General said, nodding at Dodd as if they were in agreement.

But getting the much stronger OxyContin 80mg pills – or "big greens," as they called them – proved to be much more

sis, sciatica – there were myriad ways back pain could be monetized.

"Some weeks I was able to get 5,000 oxy's and not have one problem," Dodd recalls. "The next week so many things would go wrong, I'd be lucky to get a couple of hundred roxies. Some of my doctor shoppers were business-type people, but others were stone-cold junkies. They'd forget to show up for follow-up appointments, or their prescription would expire. Or they'd get so hooked on their pills they wouldn't want to sell them. Or they'd go to rehab. Or get arrested."

One of the main distributors of the pills in Florida was Cardinal Health, a Fortune 500 company that had a facility in Lakeland supplying more than 2,000 pharmacies around the state. Churning out millions of pain pills, they eventually caught notice of law enforcement when their pills found their way to what the DEA called "rogue" pharmacies. In November 2007, Cardinal was suspended from distributing the opioids.

Days after Cardinal's suspension, Dodd and the Little General went to a pharmacy to fill a prescription only to be told there were no drugs left: They'd run out.

"Neither of us had ever heard of a drug-store running out of drugs," Dodd recalls. "At first it seemed kind of funny." But Dodd noticed a drastic change in his business. "Everything quintupled in price," Dodd says. "Some local pharmacies stopped accepting insurance because they were running out of the pills, so they only served cash customers. We had a couple of dozen prescriptions and a good amount of cash, but it wasn't enough to keep up with the demand."

Cardinal Health settled with the DEA in 2008, paying a fine of \$34 million with no criminal charges. But business had already gotten back to normal: The War on Drugs was raging in Mexico, but not for pain meds. Illicit prescription-pill use was bigger than cocaine and heroin combined – and all of it surrounded by an air of corporate respectability. Florida had grown into America's own Colombia of pain meds.

With supply humming again, the Little General continued to expand. Pretty Boy met someone from Alaska who mentioned that prices for oxy and roxie were even higher there – as much as double. The Little General soon had another conduit to sell to, in Anchorage. For his UPS shipments to Alaska and Tennessee, the Little General used an alias: Lance Attaway. Scores of packages filled with vitamin bottles stuffed with pain pills were sent each month, and scores of teddy bears returned via courier. The operation was smooth, seemingly seamless.

THERE WERE MANY RISKS TO PILL pushing, but the most pressing issue was how to transport the supply around Tampa

ILLICIT PRESCRIPTION-PILL USE WAS BIGGER THAN COCAINE AND HEROIN COMBINED – FLORIDA HAD BECOME THE COLOMBIA OF PAIN MEDS.

reasoned – then get out of the game.

"If it's working, why would you quit?" Barabas asked, incredulous.

"Everybody eventually gets caught," Dodd said. "That's one of my rules. Unless you have a reasonable goal and an exit strategy, you're going to end up in prison."

"I don't know about you, but I'm going to need way more than half a million bucks to quit," Barabas said.

"I don't mind helping you get the pills," Dodd said. "But I don't want anything to do with the rest of that other stuff. That's all on you."

The two came to an arrangement. Dodd became the Little General's largest supplier, selling his ample surplus of pills at a handsome profit – but would not move the product across state lines. To launder their money, the pair bought a license to resell electronic cigarettes as well as a couple of vans to shuttle passengers to the airport. The Little General was soon running a roaring business, shipping vitamin

difficult than the lower-dose Roxicodone. People with pain medication were willing to part with 15mg and 30mg roxie pills, but oxy's were precious and hoarded.

To solve the shortage issue, Dodd came up with an idea. They could "sponsor" people to get prescriptions; simply paying for the medical process required to get a script was beyond the means of many of the poor white folks who constituted their supply chain. Instead of looking for people with an existing script, Dodd proposed that they generate their own prescriptions: They'd pay for the doctor visits, the MRIs and the drugs. In return, they'd sell exclusively to him at an agreed-upon price of \$6 for roxies and \$20 for oxy's.

Dodd quickly recruited a handful of people to take to the local pill mills – medical practices with names like MD & More Clinic and Doctors 'R Us. Dodd called his growing group of patients "doctor shoppers." He discovered that getting the scripts was comically easy: degenerative disks, herniated disks, lumbar lordo-



AFTER THE FALL

"OxyContin went from a recreational drug to an all-consuming addiction," says Dodd. "It was destroying my life."

without risking getting busted by a local cop in a traffic stop. The answer came in the spring of 2008 from another random and dopey incident. On the afternoon of May 9th, Dodd was smoking a joint with a girlfriend when he was pulled over for a faulty brake light. The officer smelled the lingering pot and asked the pair if they were carrying any illegal substances. They said no and agreed to be searched; Dodd was so stoned he forgot he had a bag of weed in his pocket. When the cop looked in the car, he also found a pillbox hidden next to the passenger seat containing nine Roxicodones and two and a half Xanax pills.

After being told he'd face five years in prison, he says, Dodd hired an attorney, who was able to get the pill charge dropped, but he had to plead guilty for the pot. Dodd realized the only safe way to continue was to get his own prescription.

"Lance and I decided we needed to get our own oxy scripts," Dodd recalls. "It was a common tactic used by junkies, to avoid getting busted."

A friend showed the pair how to fake the MRI test: arch your back slightly, twist to apply pressure to your lower spine, and then hold the position while the machine imaged the back. Dodd and the Little General had arrived at the central truth of the pain-pill epidemic:

Back pain was difficult to properly diagnose, and the experience of pain was completely subjective. If someone claimed

to be suffering, there was really no way to prove they were lying – especially not if the MRI showed any evidence of abnormality.

Dodd's personal physician refused to assist in getting him a prescription for opiate pain medication, despite his extravagant tales about back pain from falling from a ladder and being involved in a car crash; the doctor said the drugs were too addictive and dangerous. But Dodd soon found a more compliant doctor. He then went to a radiology clinic and submitted to the hourlong MRI procedure. Sliding into the cramped, coffin-size space, Dodd arched and twisted his back, as he'd been instructed, but it was hard to maintain the position: He was actually in pain.

But his suffering served a purpose: Dodd succeeded in fooling the machine. The Little General did the same. Their diagnoses were identical: bulging disks.

"We were stoked," Dodd recalls.

The next stop was a pill-mill medical practice. The doctor was older, pale, desiccated. The exam took 30 seconds. Dodd had a script for 240 blueberries, and when he went back a few weeks later for a follow-up, he said he needed something stronger – specifically OxyContin.

"Why didn't you just say so?" the doctor said with a sigh.

Dodd's prescription, which was upped to include 120 oxy's, along with 60 Trazodone for sleep, enabled him to travel with a stash of meds without fear. The Little General and Pretty Boy were likewise secure.

"I can't tell you how awesome it was to have my own script," Dodd recalls. "It was only a week later that I was pulled over and the cops found my pills – but I could show them the prescription. So technically, I'd done nothing wrong."

DESPITE THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS they were taking at home, moving product across the country was becoming a riskier proposition. In the spring of 2008, two shipments from Lance Attaway – one for Alaska, one for Tennessee – vanished from UPS's tracking system. According to an affidavit from a DEA agent, the packages contained roughly 250 pills. When Barabas called UPS, he was told they'd just disappeared. Then the manager called back and said the packages had been found. All Mr. Attaway needed to do was come in to sign some forms before they could be sent on to their destination.

Dodd thought the call sounded fishy. When he and Barabas arrived at the UPS store, Dodd refused to go inside.

"I'll bet there's a fucking narcotics squad in there waiting for you," Dodd said.

"Whatever, bro," the Little General said. As he describes in his manuscript, Dodd scanned the parking lot [Cont. on 66]

Pete Townshend doesn't sound like a guy who's turning 70 and heading out on his band's last major tour **By ANDY GREENE**

WHO'S DONE



ON MAY 19TH, A DAY BEFORE THE WHO'S 50TH-ANNIVERSARY tour arrives at Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, Pete Townshend will celebrate his 70th birthday. "I'm not going to make a big deal out of it," he says, before adding, somewhat mysteriously, "I've made a few promises to myself that I want to keep private. I think I owe myself quite a lot now." ¶ It's two days before kickoff, and Townshend is calling from London, where he has settled into his comfortable pre-tour routine. Each morning, he gets picked up at his home in Richmond by his security man Mark Squires, who takes him to a rehearsal space at Pinewood Studios, a historic studio 40 minutes away. There, he is greeted by familiar faces. "When I walk in every day, I see Bobby Pridden at the sound board," Townshend says. "He's been with the Who for 45 years and is one of my oldest and dearest friends. Then there's Alan Rogan, who looks after my guitars and the band, which includes my brother Simon, who I don't see enough of." ¶ Townshend says he enjoys this camaraderie more than actually performing. "It's like



Onstage in
March at the
O2 Arena,
London

being back in a family," he says. "People are happy to see me. They know I'm going to be no trouble and I'm going to make them a lot of money." (Roger Daltrey, as he often does, has a more traditional view: "The shows are a joy.")

The Who are billing this as their last major tour, an idea that Daltrey has repeated in recent interviews. But Townshend can't seem to stop himself from undermining it a little. "I don't want to badmouth [the tour's promoters] AEG, because they gave us a load of money and they obviously want the tickets to sell," he says. "But we've been in this place before. We must've done three fucking last farewell tours in our career. I don't know what's going to happen next." He did take close to two hours, however, to talk about the Who's epic career, what fans can expect this time out and the future of his life in music.

This is a long tour. What is motivating you at this stage?

My first song that charted with the Who, "I Can't Explain," came out in December of 1964, but it didn't get high in the charts until the beginning of 1965. That means this is the 50th anniversary of the band and for me as a songwriter. It feels to me like something that I couldn't just let go by. Also, this isn't just about me, and it's not just about Roger. It was important to give some sense of the measure of the commitment, and I suppose the gratitude, that we feel to the fans. We're still here, and so many people aren't.

This week in the U.K., they're showing a documentary about [early Who managers] Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, who are both dead. Keith Moon is gone, and John Entwistle went. Roger and I – although we're feeling our age – have a great sense of delight in the fact that we're still here, a kind of relief. It's possible that I feel a bit less sanguine about my health than Roger does. I'm very healthy, but I have to know that if I jump off a high wall I'm going to break my ankle.

In what sense does Roger have a different take?

I think Roger does have a tremendous sense of concern that he has been seen to be a youthful, good-looking, well-preserved man, and as he gets older, the way he feels about that is in question. But that is very much in his head. At rehearsal the day before yesterday, we listened to a recording of his performance of "Love, Reign O'er Me" in Liverpool, and it's just fantastic. He's singing so brilliantly.

On this tour, you're playing songs like "Pictures of Lily," "So Sad About Us" and "A Quick One," which you've left untouched for years. What drew you back to them?

If it were my doing, I would have probably left them untouched. Roger's been

keen to dig into the band's early career. The reason that those tracks may have fallen by the wayside is because they're very backing-vocal-heavy. That was stuff that we used to do in the studio, and when we lost John Entwistle's high voice, we kind of dropped it. But in the past few years, Roger's put a band together and done a lot of work on backing vocals, and we're using a musical director.

I realized that actually having the backing vocals was like having an instrument that had been missing for many years. The Who were so stripped down in their halcyon years. In the *Live at Leeds* period, which was probably our performing peak, it was just three instrumentalists and a vocalist. I'm not crazy about "A Quick One," but Roger seems to thrive on it.

You're also playing "Slip Kid" again, which sounds amazing.

It's one of those songs I thought I would hate playing because it's tricky, but I've been really enjoying it. It feels very new. You could put it into the voice of some young Islamic student who decides to go fight in Syria and ends up in ISIS being forced to chop people's heads off, and it would fit.

While we're on the subject, when you look at ISIS and Boko Haram – and even what Putin has been up to, to some extent – do you worry about the state of the planet?

Not as long as we remember. [Laughs] You know, I am not going to get fucking accused of being a neocon by Arianna Huffington again, that dimwitted woman. [Editor's note: Huffington herself didn't call Townshend a "neocon"; he was described as that in a 2012 piece on the Huffington Post.] But I do think it's very important that we keep our ammunition ready. I do feel there is nothing to worry about as long as we're willing to protect ourselves.

Had America not interceded in World War II, Germany would have taken over the whole of Europe. I think the most important thing is that we remember that. But also remember that we don't need to act until this shit comes to our door. When that happens, whether it comes to our door in a *Charlie Hebdo* scenario or in a 9/11 scenario, we need to keep calm and to honor our own sense of values and justice and law and the way that we want to live.

Are you able to understand why a young person in America or the U.K. would go join ISIS?

I'm not particularly politically well-grounded, but from 1967 to the mid-Seventies, I was following Meher Baba and also considering joining a Sufi order. It's not exactly Islam, but it's very close. I kind of understand what they mean when they talk about what jihad is, but I don't see how it helps anybody. I don't see how it helps the people in the countries in which they live. They're getting to a point where the so-called caliphate will be run by a bunch of bullies, basically. But then, I've seen this before – in my lifetime, I grew up with bullies at school, I grew up with bullies in the Sea Scouts, I grew up with bullies in my band!

Back to the tour. You say that you enjoy the tour routine and being with old friends more than you enjoy playing onstage. Is that really true?

I always feel very sad when I say this because I think I'm unusual in this respect. People don't really believe me. But I don't enjoy performing. I don't feel uplifted on the stage. I rarely have moments these days onstage when I go into what jazz musicians call "the zone." I rarely lose myself on the stage. But I kind of grew up backstage with my dad's band, and so that's always felt familiar. Most of all, it's felt safe to me.

You said about 10 years ago that you do these tours as a favor to Roger Daltrey. Is that still a fair statement?

It's probably the other way around now. When I went back to work with the Who regularly in the late 1990s, it was to help John Entwistle with money problems. Roger was the one who came to see me, and who said,

"Listen, I can't see any other way that John can get himself out of this hole he's in. He spent too much money, he's got no earning power outside of the Who. If you're really the friend that you say you are – you always talk about how John's your most important friend, that you were in a band together when you were in school – you should fucking help him."

I said, "C'mon, Roger, this is also about you." And he said, "Yeah, I'd be happy to do it too, but that's not why I'm here." And so I agreed, and in a sense that's really where this second phase of the Who began, and



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STORY, IT
WAS AWFUL.**



Associate editor ANDY GREENE wrote about Bill Withers in March.



YOUNG MAN BLUES

(1) Entwistle, Moon, Daltrey, Townshend in 1967. (2) In 1979: "We had a hard ride. If you look at images of me then, I'm fucking angry all the time." (3) With Daltrey in 2004. "We found a way to work together [without Entwistle]."



I don't write to get feedback. I don't particularly write to feel that I'm contributing.

I haven't done a new solo piece for a really long time. If I did, I think I would want it to be something that really addressed everything that's going on in the world at the moment. I'm old enough and wise enough and stupid enough and have done enough dangerous shit to say pretty much whatever I like. It won't be popular, but nobody can hurt me now, really. When it comes to doing that work, I have to live with it for a while. I've written a couple in the last five or six years. I don't know whether I want to put an album out right now.

Some fans are getting a little frustrated. There has been one Who studio album in the past 33 years, and your last solo album was 22 years ago.

It's really hard for me to talk to a journalist and be reminded there are people out there who are counting years and

going, "The Who haven't done this for so many years, and Pete hasn't put out any songs in so many years." For 30 years I had been working flat fucking out, until maybe the last two or three years, when I've given myself permission to take a holiday that's longer than a couple of weeks. My family, my friends, my business partners, people that are involved with me in

it's been rolling along ever since. It kind of gives people who don't know the real history the impression that we've been going all along. But in 1982, I quit the band at the end of a tour. I went to go work at a publishing house in London for eight years. I made a few solo recordings, but I was really leading another kind of life. So when I came back to this, it was really for Roger, for John, and then I realized, as I've just said, in a sense for the greater good.

I don't want to sound patronizing. I'm going to make a load of money on this tour. What I do with it is my affair. But with respect to the Who, there's no question that when I do this, it makes a lot of people happy, and that's where I look for my fulfillment. Doing a job that I find easy, that I seem to do very well, despite my age, comes back to me. I occasionally catch fire, and people like it.

How often do you work on new songs these days?

Every day. I just *don't* do what Dylan does. I don't drag myself around the world, and I don't put out an album every six weeks [laughs]. But I've got loads of songs. I'm working on a big project at the mo-

ment, which might be half rock opera, half art installation. I don't know where it's going to go. I'm going to start with a book. I don't want to talk too much about that now.

I'm also working on old songs, going right from the beginning. I missed a few songs at the very beginning – gave tapes to producers to listen to and never got them back. But from "My Generation" onwards, I've got tapes of every single song I ever wrote, and the supporting paperwork. Sometimes they're silly little scraps and sometimes quite more. It's interesting to go back. But I'm always working on new stuff as well, so I don't have that feeling that I'm always luxuriating in the past.

What happens to the new songs? Are they just sitting on hard drives in your house?

They're mostly at a home studio. I remember somebody saying, "The terrible thing about magnetic data is, of course, all you need is a big enough magnetron bomb and it would erase everything that we have stored" [laughs]. So I started to put stuff on paper. I don't really give a shit whether it's out there or it's being heard. You know,

theater work and everything else will tell you my life is packed. I'm happy with that.

Do you ever think about touring solo? Your solo acoustic shows are terrific.

Again, it's something that I'm really good at. I don't know. The Who was a terrifying band to be a part of for our children and for our family. It was terrifying. When you look back at the story, the stuff that surrounded us, it was fucking awful.

In terms of the death and destruction you left in your wake?

Yeah. Prior to *Quadrophenia* and [manager] Bill Curbishley's arrival, there was such chaos. The price that we all paid was incredibly high, and for me, when I look at touring now, whether it's with the Who or on my own – we had a hard ride. That's why I left the band in '82. When Keith died, I tried to continue for a while. If you look at images and film of me onstage in 1978 and 1979, I'm fucking angry all the time. I'm stomping about, I'm sneering. I'm playing guitar solos in which I only play one note for 15 minutes. It's punky and it's cynical and it's tough to see.

I'm in a better place now. But what I was going to say was: If I [Cont. on 65]

SEARCHING FOR KURT

The Nirvana singer's daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, is on a sacred mission to create an honest picture of her father – for the world, and herself

BY DAVID FRICKE



THREE DAYS BEFORE THE PREMIERE AT THE Sundance Film Festival in January, Courtney Love, the widow of Nirvana singer-guitarist Kurt Cobain, and Frances Bean Cobain, the couple's only child, watched the final cut of *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck* in a private screening room in Burbank, California. Brett Morgen, who wrote, directed and produced the documentary, was also present. ¶ It was an uneasy occasion. Frances, 22, had already seen *Montage of Heck*; she is an executive producer. Her mother – who set the project in motion eight years ago but had no role in its production – had not. Frances says Love “asked me to see it with her, because she had been putting it off for months and months.” In the screening room, the two sat together on a sofa – Frances in her mother's lap. ¶ Love, 50, had first approached Morgen about a Kurt documentary in 2007, 13 years after the Nirvana lead

Frances Bean Cobain in March. “For 20 years, my dad has been this mythical figure. I want to present the man.”



er took his own life in April 1994 at his home in Seattle. Love, a big fan of Morgen's 2002 documentary *The Kid Stays in the Picture*, offered him unrestricted access to the storage facility housing Kurt's archive of artwork, journals and private recordings.

But production stalled as Love fought what she now calls "a tsunami of financial and legal insanity." In 2010, Frances – who was 20 months old when Kurt died – turned 18. That year, in a confidential agreement with Love, Frances became more involved in the management of her father's estate. That soon included joining Morgen in the resurrection of his documentary. Love was eventually interviewed by Morgen for *Montage of Heck* but had no editorial or consulting voice.

Love and Frances' volatile relationship – complicated by unresolved grief, tensions with Kurt's family, Love's struggles with drugs and her roller-coaster career in music and films – has spilled, at times, into gossip columns and courtrooms. Frances says now that she and Love "have resolved a lot of our issues. I grew up. And she grew up too." But Love remembers that day in the screening room as "really intense. We were kind of spooning on this big couch. And we were both crying."

At two hours and 12 minutes, *Montage of Heck*, which premieres on HBO on May 4th, is a visceral, breakneck account of Kurt's 27 years – his chaotic adolescence, rocket-force fame, heroin addiction and descent into hopelessness – mostly in his own art and words: song demos and audio experiments (the film is named after a famous 1988 cassette collage); animated treatments of Kurt's drawings and journal confessions; taped recollections and interviews, such as my October 1993 encounter with him for a ROLLING STONE cover story. (I was not paid for its use.) There are family movies from Kurt's childhood, rare stage footage of Nirvana and acute reflections from a small circle of intimates, including his divorced parents, Don Cobain and Wendy O'Connor.

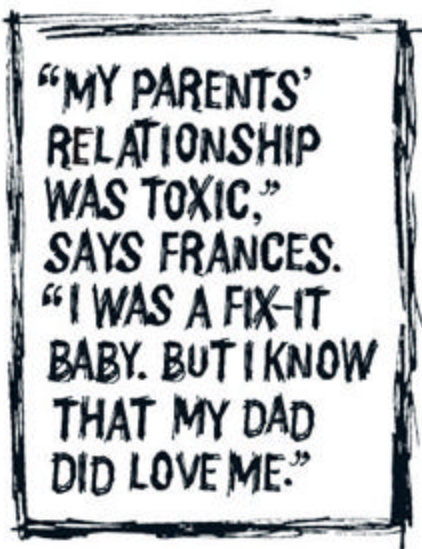
Frances enters the film in the last half hour, as an infant and toddler. In one home video, she is happily splashing in a bathtub with Kurt. In a later sequence, Frances is perched on his lap, getting a haircut. She cries; Kurt looks worn and dazed, barely able to keep his eyes open. There is a prominent sore on his forehead. "I'm not on drugs, I'm tired," he protests in a drowsy whine. The lie in that sentence is chilling. So is the truth.

"My mother held me, cried on me and just said, 'I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry,'" Frances says, recalling that day

in Burbank, as they watched the haircut scene. "Just kept saying it over and over. But then she said, 'Do you realize how much your father loved you?' And I said, 'Yeah, I do.'"

"Kurt did love her," Love says again when we speak. "The film shows that. But after the Rome thing" – Kurt's failed suicide attempt on pills in March 1994, during Nirvana's final tour – "it was like a light went out."

Love and Frances attended the Sundance premiere of *Montage of Heck* with O'Connor, Kurt's younger sister Kim and Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic, all of whom are interviewed in the movie. Frances did not sit through the showing. "I didn't want people to watch me cry watching the film," she says. But that private



viewing with Love "was one of those tender, rare moments I had with my mom."

Frances also confided something to Morgen after the screening: "Frances said it was the first time her mom had apologized for anything relating to her youth."

FRANCES IS A COMPACT BUNDLE of eager, effervescent welcome as she opens the front door of her Los Angeles home, on a quiet street rising into the Hollywood Hills. Before dropping onto a living-room sofa, lighting the first in a chain of cigarettes and jumping into her first major interview – the only one she is giving on behalf of *Montage of Heck* – Frances rushes to the kitchen to make me some coffee, then returns, sheepishly admitting she couldn't find a proper sugar bowl. She has put the sugar in a red shot glass with a plastic spoon.

At five feet five and 103 pounds, Frances has, she says, "my dad's frame, but man shoulders from my mom." She has broad,

attractive features iced with wide, penetrating blue-green eyes – a striking blend of her parents' looks. Frances has added her own gothic strokes and punk attitude to that mix: maroon lipstick and long black hair that falls past her shoulders, a black T-shirt with Mao Zedong on the front, and a pendant that reads IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.

That extends to the living-room decor. Currently taking college-level courses in philosophy and drawing, Frances is a visual artist – she has exhibited her work in L.A. – with a fondness for horror movies, "good at distortion, making things creepy," as she puts it. An enormous model of the head of H.R. Giger's monster in *Alien* is on top of a piano, and a full-size human skeleton sits on the bench, looking ready to play. A Spice Girls doll set, still in its shrink-wrap, leans against a wall next to a framed piece of art by Charles Manson. (When Frances originally walked through this house, looking to buy, she had a strange find: The previous family, she says, "had kids. And in one of the rooms was a Kurt figurine." She moved in anyway.)

"Here is the thing that's interesting about me and this film," Frances says. "I'm the only person on Earth who is emotionally invested in the film but can watch it like an audience member. I have no memory of Kurt. So I can be analytical. I could tell Brett what I liked, what I didn't, what I thought was beautiful – but also recognize, 'Oh, that's me on the screen.'"

"What really surprised me," she goes on, "was watching my parents' love story. Because they were so close to my age now." Kurt was 22 when he first met Love, in 1990. She was 25, in the band Hole and a child of divorced parents. They married in February 1992; Frances was born that year, on August 18th.

"It was like friends falling in love – I did not expect that," Frances admits. "I always knew their relationship was toxic," referring to the couple's early bond over drugs. "And I don't promote having a fix-it baby, which is what I was – to fix their problems. But I know from the video footage and letters that I have that Kurt wrote me, from my mom's interpretations and my grandmother's experiences – my dad did love me."

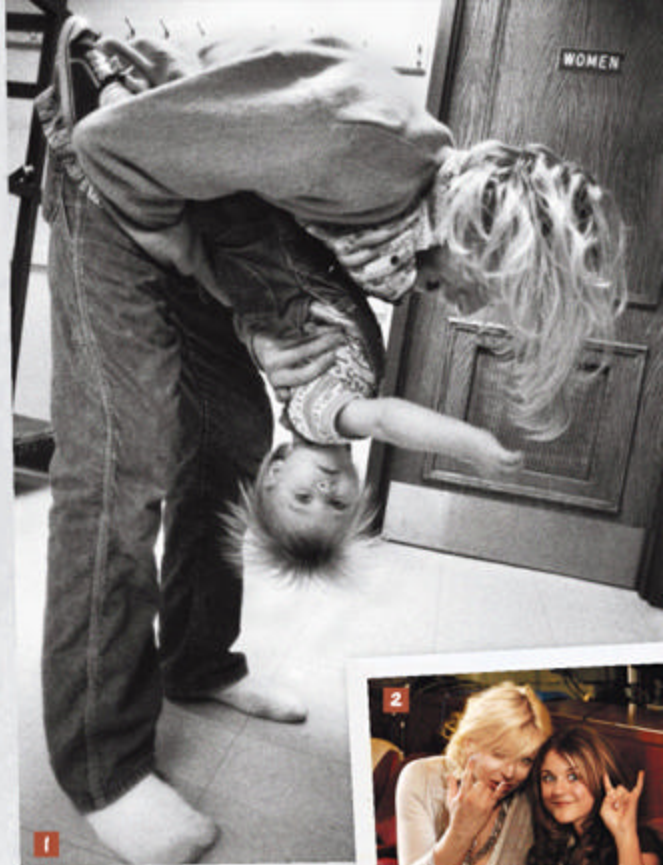
"You feel you were a fix-it baby?" Morgen, who is sitting nearby, asks in surprise.

"In the sense that their own families were so chaotic," Frances replies, "that they wanted to create their own family as soon as possible: 'If we create our own family, it will be nothing like our families were.'" Frances stubs out one cigarette and lights another. "It ended up being a million more times chaotic."

In nearly three hours of conversation, as the late afternoon sunshine coming through a sliding-glass patio door fades to

Senior writer DAVID FRICKE wrote about the Foo Fighters in November.

PREVIOUS PAGE: HAIR BY CLYDE HAYGOOD; MAKEUP BY SHARON GAULT; STYLING BY BRETT ALAN NELSON; SET DESIGN BY EAMONN MCGLYNN; PROP STYLING BY SKYE PREY; OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHARLES PETERSON; KEVIN MAZUR; RAY MICKSHAW/WIREIMAGE; CHARLES PETERSON; © LINDSAY BRICE/CORBIS OUTLINE; WENDY O'CONNOR/COURTESY OF HBO



ABOUT A DAD

(1) Cobain with baby Frances in Milwaukee, 1993. "Kurt did love [Frances]," says Love. "But after the Rome thing" – his March 1994 suicide attempt – "it was like a light went out." (2) Love and Frances in 2005. (3) Kurt in 1993. (4) *Bleach*-era Nirvana: Novoselic, Kurt and Chad Channing, in 1990. (5) Kurt, age 15. (6) With Love, circa 1992. "What surprised me [in the movie] was my parents' love story," says Frances.



gray, Frances talks about Kurt at length and on the record for the first time, with dizzying energy, in a deep, slightly grainy voice that inevitably recalls Kurt's on my 1993 cassettes. Frances drops frequent f-bombs for colorful emphasis. There are moments, too, of still-girlish delight and curiosity. When I tell Frances that she and I have met before – Frances was one year old, charming the Nirvana entourage backstage in Chicago before my interview with Kurt – she smiles and laughs. “Nice to meet you again!” she says brightly. Later, Morgen mentions to Frances that I am recording her on the same tape recorder I used that night in 1993. “That’s awesome,” Frances says, grabbing her cellphone. “Can I take a picture of that?”

Morgen recalls his first meeting with Frances about *Montage of Heck*, shortly before he restarted production in 2013. The director had a deal with HBO for a Kurt Cobain film. “I go to her house,” Morgen says, “figuring I’m going to explain what I’m doing. I didn’t realize she could kill the project, which later I found out she could. We sit down in her breakfast nook, and before I can say anything, she presented me with her take on what a film on Kurt should be.”

Frances, Morgen continues, “wanted a film that dealt with Kurt as an artist and was honest. She said, ‘For 20 years, my dad has been like Santa Claus, this mythical figure. People come up to me and say, “Your dad’s so cool.” And I don’t know him. I want to present Kurt the man.’”

Morgen was relieved. “When she was done,” he says, “I told her, ‘You just pitched me my movie.’” They shook hands. Then Frances told Morgen something else. “She said, ‘I just shook your hand, and already I know you better than I knew my father.’”

Love says Frances, as a child, did not ask a lot of questions about Kurt – what he was like and how he acted. “More later,” Love goes on, “like, ‘What kind of habits do I have that are like my dad’s? What do you mean, I bite my nails like my dad?’” Frances says that *Montage of Heck* is the first time she has seen Kurt’s life “collectively, chronologically.” For years, especially as a teenager, she learned about Kurt in odd, intimate flashes.

She recalls a trip to Aberdeen, Washington – the logging town where Kurt was born – and visiting the old Cobain-family house with her grandmother. At one point, in Kurt’s bedroom, O’Connor

FROM THE VAULT ROLLING STONE’S LAST VISIT WITH KURT

Kurt Cobain called David Fricke directly to set up the singer’s last RS interview. Some of the exchanges in their early-morning conversation – for one, when Cobain called Nirvana’s “I Hate Myself and I Want to Die” a “joke” – became haunting six months later, when he took his own life. But on this night he was upbeat.

A SHIRTLESS, DISHEVELED KURT COBAIN PAUSES ON the backstage stairway leading to Nirvana’s dressing room at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, offers a visitor a sip of his après-gig tea, and says in a deadpan voice, “I’m really glad you could make it for the shittiest show on the tour.”

He’s right. Tonight’s concert – a week into the band’s first U.S. tour in two years – is a real stinker. The venue’s cavernous sound turns songs like “Territorial Pissings” into riff pudding, and Cobain is bedeviled all night by guitar- and vocal-monitor problems. There are moments of prickly brilliance, but there is no “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” and when the house lights go up, so does a loud chorus of boos.

According to the Cobain press myth – “pissy, complaining, freaked-out schizophrenic,” as he puts it – the 26-year-old singer and guitarist should have fired the soundman, canceled this interview and gone back to his hotel room to sulk. Instead, he spends his wind-down time backstage doting on his daughter, the one-year-old Frances Bean Cobain, a petite blond beauty who barrels around the room with a smile for everyone in her path. Later, back at the hotel, armed with nothing stronger than a pack of cigarettes and two minibar bottles of Evian, Cobain is in a thoughtful, discursive mood, taking pains to explain that success doesn’t really suck – not as much as it used to, anyway.

“It was so fast and explosive,” he says in a sleepy, gravelly voice of his crisis of confidence following the success of *Nevermind*. “I didn’t know how to deal with it. If there was a Rock

Star 101 course, I would have liked to take it. It might have helped me.

“I still see stuff, descriptions of rock stars in some magazine – ‘Sting, the environmental guy,’ and ‘Kurt Cobain, the whiny, complaining neurotic, bitchy guy who hates everything, hates rock stardom, hates his life.’ And I’ve never been happier in my life. Especially within the last week, because the shows have been going so well – except for tonight. I’m a much happier guy than a lot of people think I am.”

From “SUCCESS DOESN’T SUCK,” RS 674, January 27th, 1994



lifted up a floorboard where her son used to stash his weed. Frances was startled to see, on one wall, an Iron Maiden logo that Kurt had drawn when he was 15; she had recently defaced her bathroom door at home in California with the same graffiti. "Genetics," she says, rolling her eyes, "is fucking weird."

Kurt's mother and sister and Novosel-ic declined to speak about *Montage of Heck* for this story. Love isn't sure she can watch it again. "It made me really raw," she claims. "It's like opening up a stab." But the film, Love notes, "gives me a little more peace with my daughter." And she does see a change in Frances' relationship with her father's memory.

That process actually began soon after Morgen and Frances shook hands, when the director accompanied her to the storage facility to look through Kurt's archive. Frances had been there once before – "a weird experience," she groans, involving lawyers and inventory. This time, with Morgen, she opened boxes and, in particular, a guitar case "filled with his art supplies. He had this paintbrush – this pink thing that looked like the kind you'd get with a Barbie paint kit – and dried-out oils."

"It smelled like he smelled," she recalls. "I had this teddy bear, and it smells like him. So I do know his smell. Holding that brush – he became humanized to me. He actually painted with this and touched it."

"Oh, oh," Love says, with deep sighs, when she hears Frances' story. "I didn't know that. She didn't tell me."



WANT TO HEAR SOME stuff?"

Morgen sits at a table in his sparsely furnished office in Los Angeles, facing a pair of computer screens loaded with MP3s, where he is compiling a soundtrack album for *Montage of Heck*. The record will not have any Nirvana tracks. It will be drawn from the massive collection of home demos, songwriting tapes and sonic bricolage that Morgen used as the primary source for Kurt's voice in the film.

Scrolling through his computer, Morgen plays a few raw, nutty, delightful and foreboding performances – "all Kurt singing at his place," the director says. There is a full, anguished rendition of the Beatles' "And I Love Her," heard in part in the movie during scenes of Kurt and Love at

home, kissing. An original piece, provisionally titled "Rehash," is a Black Sabbath-like guitar riff with a shredded-falsetto vocal; Kurt shouts "solo, solo" and "chorus, chorus" in the unfinished bits. A charming acoustic-guitar instrumental is

HEART-SHAPED BOX

Director Morgen and Frances went together to a facility to look through ephemera like this collection of Kurt's art supplies (below) and pages of notes and drawings.



suddenly disrupted by a barrage of weird mouth noises. "This is how he assembled things – one long series," Morgen says, "stopping, starting, stopping again, starting something new."

On one trip into Kurt's archive, Morgen found a box just labeled "Cassette." Inside were 108 tapes, more than 200 hours of audio, including Kurt's original hand-labeled copy of "Montage of Heck." "That stuff would be invaluable in getting to an unfiltered Kurt," Morgen says. In one section of the movie, animated like a graphic novel, Kurt describes in a startlingly neutral voice his first attempt at suicide – when he was in high school.

"When I got to that tape, I hadn't gotten to the journals yet," Morgen explains. He eventually found Kurt's entry on that failed try. "He wrote the story, then went to his microphone and recorded it – stop,

do a retake." The shock, Morgen suggests, is "not that he discusses suicide." It is the reason Kurt left on that tape for the attempt: "I couldn't handle the ridicule."

Morgen was born in 1968, a year after Kurt, and grew up in the Los Angeles area. As a boy, like Kurt, Morgen endured the pain of divorce; his parents separated when he was nine. "I related to Kurt's experience at home immensely," Morgen admits. He also saw Nirvana live in 1990, at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, and in 1993, at the Forum in L.A.

"Brett is very fastidious, pores through the most minute details," says Stefan Nadelman, who animated Kurt's drawings and journals for *Montage of Heck*. "I've never seen anyone pay this much attention to detail." Nadelman also says Morgen never relayed any comments or criticism of his work from Frances, Kurt's family or HBO. "He didn't show them any of the animation until he approved it. And once he approved it, there were no changes."

Morgen was in production when, at Christmas 2013, he got a holiday text message from Love with best wishes and a question: "How's the film going?" Morgen replied with a single sentence: "At this point, I'm making the film for Frances." Frances, in turn, assured Morgen access and independence. "My role, I thought, was to go see the film," she says, "when it was done."

But Frances' association was vital in other ways, such as the hunting and gathering of rare photographs and interviews. "One of the challenges," says Jessica Berman-Bogdan, archival producer for *Montage of Heck*, "was reaching out to noncommercial sources" – freelance writers and photographers who were friends of Kurt's. "To let people know Frances was behind it allowed them to feel comfortable" about contributing unedited tapes and full contact sheets. "A few people who did interviews said, 'Please make sure Frances sees this. I want her to have it. I always meant to send it.'"

The childhood movies came from his mother. "She had saved everything," Morgen says of O'Connor, still amazed. "I mean, ticket stubs from his first time at an Aberdeen High School football game, when he was four years old." Kim Cobain, who has also worked as a bartender, earned her credit as "photo and ephemera coordinator," identifying places, [Cont. on 64]



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Alabama Shakes Blast Into Space



Soul rockers free their minds to explore new psychedelic worlds on their second album

ALABAMA
SHAKES
SOUND &
COLOR

Alabama Shakes

Sound & Color ATO

★★★★½

BY WILL HERMES

On their 2012 debut, *Boys & Girls*, Alabama Shakes coined a hot retro mix of black Southern soul and white rock & roll that connected. It was the kind of instant-vintage album that college kids and their record-buying grandpas could love, and it made the Shakes a rare success story among new guitar bands in the streaming era.

Sticking to that formula must have been tempting, but *Sound & Color* shows that this band aspires to be much more than roots-rock poster children. This is a weirder, woozier, fiercer and sexier record than their debut in nearly every way. Yes, singer-guitarist Brittany Howard still taps classic R&B vocal moves, those spirit-channeling shouts and moans; guitarist Heath Fogg still echoes licks from Al Green sideman Teenie Hodges and Stax mainstay Steve Cropper. But they're touchstones that get transformed by production fit for a cannabis dispensary.

The title track kicks off the album with a statement of intent. Vibraphone notes float by in deep reverb, suggesting a classic slow-build soul burner like the lonely brass that opens Otis Redding's "Try a Little Tenderness." But it's all foreplay: Howard's voice enters in layers, settling into a hall-of-mirrors call-and-

response chant while discordant strings tug at the melody and electronics flicker like old bar neon. "A new world hangs outside the window/Beautiful and strange," Howard sings with a delicious born-again dreaminess.

There's often a firm dividing line drawn between modern R&B vocal styles and what came before them – you're either Sam Cooke or Trey Songz. It's great to hear Howard ignoring those rules. Her stretched-out vowels chart a spacey Soulquarian head trip on "Gemini" and swarm in fractal harmonies on "Over My Head." Howard pushes her voice on the old-school tracks, too: The Stax-y single "Don't Wanna Fight" showcases steam-kettle squeals; there's new playfulness in the reggae of "Guess Who." And if you have any feel for rock or soul, hearing her detonate the titular demand of "Gimme All Your Love" – "sing" is too puny a word – should rival the most thrilling music experiences you'll have in 2015.

Fogg and Howard's guitars stay minimal, serving the songs, but their palette has broadened. They give us distorted, mosh-ready runs on "The Greatest" and glassy-eyed glissandi and sustains on "Gemini." Some credit clearly goes to producer Blake Mills, a guitarist with masterful tonal command who's one of rock's best vintage-to-modern mediators (see his work with artists from Fiona Apple to Conor Oberst). Touring keyboardist Ben Tanner has a new prominence on organ and synths; moonlighting string arranger Rob Moose continues to prove himself the 2015 version of David Bowie/Elton John collaborator Paul Buckmaster.

Howard's lyrics tend to dodge specifics, and at times they feel disappointingly vague. But the ache, frustration, hunger, wonder and bliss in her idiosyncratic hurricane of a voice – magnified by music of new imagination and detail – stand out more clearly than ever.

LISTEN NOW!
Hear key tracks from these albums at
RollingStone.com/albums.



Duke of Earl:
Sweatshirt

Earl Sweatshirt: Welcome to His Nightmares

West Coast cult hero raps about his darkest demons on a brilliant, claustrophobic solo set

Earl Sweatshirt *I Don't Like Shit,*

I Don't Go Outside Tan Cressida/Columbia ★★½



On his first studio album, 2013's *Doris*, the most mysterious member of L.A. shock-rap gremlins Odd Future proved himself by exploring real-life alienation. On his excellent second LP, Earl Sweatshirt keeps deepening his game – spooling out dense, mordant rhymes over zombie-like blunted tracks as he somehow sucks you into his sunless reality. It's amazing that music so claustrophobic can be this engrossing.

As always, Sweatshirt is most compelling when he's going toe to toe with his own demons. "I spent the day drinking and missing my grandmother," he raps on "Huey," perfectly summing up the music's desolate vibe. "Mantra" opens with some manic grandstanding ("With a cleaver and a .30 and some twisted weed/I pick one and let the crimson leak"), then slides into a downhearted breakup song. "Grief" is a harrowing shut-in snapshot: "I just want my time and my mind intact/When they both gone, you can't buy 'em back." At just 10 songs in a half-hour, *I Don't Like Shit* is surprisingly concise – even if it's sometimes dark and paranoid enough to make *There's a Riot Goin' On* sound like the *Three's Company* theme. And who needs more? Even a half-hour with Earl is enough to leave you with a lifetime of creepy memories.

KEY TRACKS:
"Mantra,"
"Grief," "Huey"

JON DOLAN



The Sonics

This Is the Sonics Revox

★★★★

Rock pioneers return 50 years after debut, still slay

Punk before punk, garage rock before anyone flagged it, the Sonics' 1965 *Here Are the Sonics* mixed Chuck Berry and Little Richard with greaseball white-boy originals. This reunion concedes nothing to the following half-century. Rob Lind still bleats sax like he's pummeling a sandbag, Jerry Roslie's howls would still make primal-scream therapist Arthur Janov plotz, and producer Jim Diamond drives Larry Parypa's stabbing guitar in deeper than ever. The new songs sound vintage; so do the covers: Their take on the Kinks' "The Hard Way" out-rocks the original, echoing the Brits' more loutish "You Really Got Me." They can still teach their garage offspring a thing or two.

WILL HERMES



Speedy Ortiz

Foil Deer Carpark

★★★½

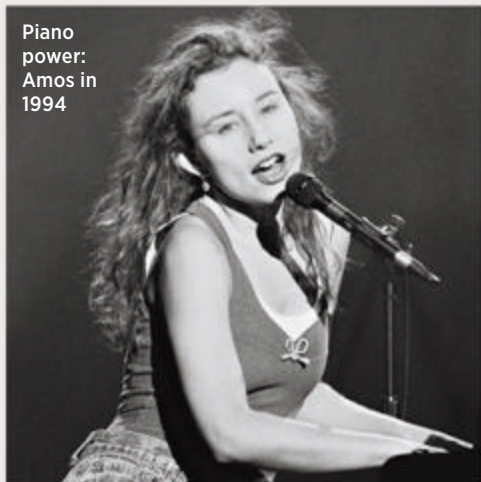
Fuzzed-out indie crew ups the wordplay and the energy

Massachusetts indie rockers Speedy Ortiz take a plunge down the rabbit hole on their second LP. Frontwoman Sadie Dupuis is their bedraggled Alice in Wonderland, tumbling past the cartoonish faces of every ex-friend and bitter stranger, with plenty of Mad Hatter-worthy wordplay along the way ("We were the law-school rejects/So we quarreled at the bar instead"). *Foil Deer* is an upswing from the listless cynicism that clouded their 2013 breakout, *Major Arcana*: This time, Dupuis and fellow guitarist Devin McKnight take charge. Album highlight "Raising the Skate" is a bold provocation to any doubters: "If you wanna throw," Dupuis says, "you better have an awfully big stone."

SUZY EXPOSITO

REISSUES

Piano power: Amos in 1994



Earthquakes and Other Stories

Tori Amos *Little Earthquakes: Deluxe Edition* Rhino ★★★★★

Tori Amos *Under the Pink: Deluxe Edition* Rhino ★★★★★



Tori Amos arrived in 1991 like the cool older sister of a million alt-rock fans' dreams, hair aflame in a shade unattainable by Manic Panic. The pop charts had never heard a female voice quite like the one on *Little Earthquakes*, from the sharp mix of desire and frustration in "Precious Things" ("So you can make me come/ That doesn't make you Jesus") to the raw pain in the instrument-free, rape-

survivor inner dialogue of "Me and a Gun." Nearly 25 years later, the album's emotional highs and lows seem even more impressive for a debut. These deluxe reissues flesh out *Little Earthquakes* and 1994's more piano-heavy *Under the Pink* with worthy B sides like her "Smells Like Teen Spirit" cover. Another highlight: the handful of live recordings, with fan favorites like "The Waitress" and "Winter." Not everything is essential (the remix of "God" is the epitome of Nineties DJ rock gone wrong), but, overall, Amos' messages ring out as powerfully as ever. **JESSICA MACHADO**

Treasures From Cuba

Buena Vista Social Club *Lost and Found* World Circuit/Nonesuch ★★★★★



Many of the Cuban masters who defined 1997's *Buena Vista Social Club* are gone now. That fact makes these archival finds precious; the music makes them irresistible. Some are outtakes from the original sessions,

like Omara Portuondo's lancing read of "Lágrimas Negras." Others emerged from the solo projects that followed, like "Pedacito de Papel," a guitar ballad cut with folk hero Eliades Ochoa. With Cuba finally opening up, here's hoping the heirs to this tradition can carry it forward. **WILL HERMES**



Various Artists

Furious 7: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack Atlantic

★★★★½

T.I., Wiz Khalifa and others get pulses racing on all-star set

Pop music and cars have a long history, but the *Furious 7* soundtrack goes one step further, seeking out 16 tracks thrilling enough for the biggest chase movie of the decade. T.I. and Young Thug zigzag over rave synths on "Off-Set," bachata singer Prince Royce goes deep house on the coy "My Angel," and French Montana flows over J. Balvin's reggaeton hit "Ay Vamos." Naturally, Lil Jon and DJ Snake's "Turn Down for What" makes an appearance. The resulting LP doesn't just move between hip-hop, EDM and Latin pop – it shows all three genres trading ideas. Environmentalists, rejoice: This one is plenty of fun even if no one's burning gas. **NICK MURRAY**



Scott Weiland and the Wildabouts

Blaster Softdrive

★★

A once-great rock frontman gets reduced to tiring self-parody

With Stone Temple Pilots, Scott Weiland was one of grunge's greatest singers, crooning and growling in equal measure. His husky howls were also one of the super-ingredients in Velvet Revolver. But on most of *Blaster*, Weiland's first all-new solo album since 2008, he suffers from a bad case of Generic Rock Voice, firing off gravely clichés like, "In the nick of time/I was taken by surprise by this girl of mine" ("Amethyst"). Unfortunately, this approach is perfectly suited to his new backing band's unimaginative, Aerosmith-ish hard-rock riffage. Redeeming moments? The catchy "Blue Eyes" and the T. Rex cover "20th Century Boy," when Weiland finally shows his true grit. **KORY GROW**

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BOOKS

A Brief History of the Beat

Tracing the EDM explosion, from Eighties clubs to full pop domination

The Underground Is Massive: How Electronic Dance Music Conquered America Michaelangelo Matos

Matos Dey Street ★★½



Now that EDM is the new rock & roll – a seditious grassroots movement that went on to become the frenzied soundtrack of its era – the time has come for a cleareyed,

authoritative account of the music. Using everything from now-ancient mailing-list posts to fresh interviews with DJs, scene-makers and promoters, Michaelangelo Matos (an RS contributor) unfurls this epic saga in style. From the pioneering Chicago house-music scene of the early Eighties through the sight of Daft Punk winning Grammys three decades later, Matos methodically recounts



Fatboy Slim, circa 1998

the way the music gradually seeped into pop and the culture at large, hand in hand with the rise of the Internet and as many drugs as on a Grateful Dead tour. As with rock & roll, EDM experienced its own growing pains as it went mainstream, and the sections on the Nineties gold rush – Fatboy Slim confronting the surly mobs at Woodstock '99, Moby's spectacular rise and eventual fall – are especially vivid. Along the way, Matos also

touches on the rise of ambient; crossover acts like Deee-Lite; Rick Rubin's long-forgotten techno label; and the origins of the term "EDM" (academia, it turns out). For anyone who thinks the beats began with Avicii or Calvin Harris, here's the place to pump up the history. **DAVID BROWNE**



Matt and Kim

New Glow Harvest

★★½

Happy-go-lucky duo spray Silly String all over the party

Matt and Kim are experts at throwing euphorically geeky dance parties, cranking out jams that would sound more at home in a bounce castle than in a club. The mix of indie pop, hip-hop and EDM on the Brooklyn duo's fifth album has never been catchier – from the twerped-out trap music of "Stirred Up" to the casual swag of "Hoodie On" to the sugar-shocked New Wave of "Make a Mess," their all-smiles assault can be adorable, at least in moderate doses. But unless you're the kind of person who throws your hands in the air to a salvo like, "We're riding bikes through red lights/We're bulletproof," the cuteness starts to wear thin pretty fast. **JON DOLAN**

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Passion Pit

Kindred Columbia

★★½

Synth-pop sweethearts get a little too comfortable

Passion Pit are excellent at sounding like Passion Pit – they’ve mastered the art of pairing emotionally naked lyrics with sweet, lush synth beats. On their third LP, though, that strength becomes a fault, as the band’s tender vibes begin to blur into sameness. Singer Michael Angelakos’ writing remains sharp, telling stories about family drama that are complex yet conversational. And the band takes a few steps beyond its formula, daring to dabble in funk-flavored beats on standouts “Where the Sky Hangs” and “My Brother Taught Me How to Swim.” But much of the rest of *Kindred* is so relentlessly *up*, it starts to feel suffocating. **BRITTANY SPANOS**



The Mountain Goats

Beat the Champ Merge

★★★½

Hearts (and noses) break on a concept album about wrestling

From 2002’s “The Best Ever Death Metal Band in Denton” to the lauded novel *Wolf in White Van*, underdog artisans have been John Darnielle’s favorite alter egos. His new Mountain Goats set draws its characters from the world of small-time wrestling. Expecting jokes? Think again. A battered dude poignantly remembers golden years (“The Ballad of Bull Ramos”); another prepares to finally reveal his true self (“Unmasked!”). The music is fantastically rangy, with discordant strings and jazz piano nuzzling punk-busker guitar. That WWF road-trip playlist you made with Springsteen’s “The Wrestler” just got way more interesting. **WILL HERMES**



Shawn Mendes

Handwritten Island

★★★

Friendly Canadian strummer is coming for your Vine views

Just as baby boomers trawled the Seventies for a new Dylan, millennials – and those who profit off them – are still in search of the next Bieber. Shawn Mendes, a 16-year-old Canadian with more Vine followers than Justin himself, once seemed like a viable candidate. His debut album, though, presents him as a nice-guy guitar strummer more influenced by the light acoustic pop of Ed Sheeran. And, like the British teen idol, Mendes has more rhythm than you’d expect (note the Nelly singsong flows on “Aftertaste”). “Kid in Love” might be about not growing up, but its playful self-awareness suggests that the singer is already plenty savvy. **NICK MURRAY**



Waxahatchee

Ivy Tripp Merge

★★★½

A rising songwriter rages with blazing focus, strong melodies

Two years ago, Waxahatchee’s bracingly intense *Cerulean Salt* made punk singer-guitarist Katie Crutchfield an indie star. Now she is terrified of slowing down. “I can be a ray of light,” she sings on “Stale by Noon,” “but you are always in my head.” It’s one of many songs where Crutchfield loses patience with herself or others: “I left you out like a carton of milk,” she admits on the breakup jam “Air,” frustrated by her own listless ways. Aimlessness can be a rite of passage for twentysomethings, and Crutchfield shines brightest when she transforms that fear into frenetic pop joy – bursting to “shout it from the rooftop/Then hide in the basement and cheer.” **SARAH GRANT**



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– NICK LACHEY



MOVIES

BY PETER TRAVERS



A LAST HURRAH Walker leaps, drives and does miracles one final time.

Cheers and Tears Power '7'

The 'Fast and the Furious' gang revs up to honor Paul Walker and celebrate his too-short life

Furious 7

Paul Walker, Vin Diesel

Directed by James Wan

★★★★½

IT PROBABLY SEEMS LAME to call *Furious 7* a family film. But what the fuck, it is – the family being the audiences that have stuck with this car-porn franchise, thick and thin, since the first chapter, in 2001. And the family of actors and crew who have gathered here to pay tribute to one of their own.

That would be Paul Walker, who plays Brian O'Connor, the undercover cop who infiltrated an outlaw gang of East L.A. street racers, run by Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel), and stayed to form a bond. Walker, 40, died in a high-speed car crash on November 30th, 2013, in the passenger seat of a 2005 Porsche Carrera GT that hit trees and a concrete lamppost.

With only half of Walker's scenes finished at the time of his tragic death, it took an act of will to decide the fate of *Furious 7*. After taking time to grieve, Walker's brothers, Caleb and Cody, stepped up

to fill in for scenes that digital grafting couldn't cover. Tough job. It had to look seamless.

And it pretty much does. *Furious 7* is the best *F&F* by far, two hours of pure pow fueled by dedication and passionate heart. This one sticks with you. The usual flaws – plot bumps,



BROS FOR LIFE Diesel and Walker first paired in 2001's *The Fast and the Furious*.

muscle acting, tweet-length dialogue – fade in the face of the camaraderie on and off screen. Finishing the film in Walker's honor clearly brought out the best in everyone. It's bittersweet seeing Walker in action again. But it's also a kick to watch him take the wheel or hang off a bus in Azerbaijan

that happens to be hanging off a cliff. He feels at home.

Home, of course, is where *Furious 7* starts. Back in L.A., Brian finally looks uncomfortable with a moving vehicle. That's because it's a suburban minivan he uses to pick up his girl, Mia (the ever-stellar Jordana Brewster), and their infant son. Mia tells her brother Dom she loves having her family reconnected. But she admits that Brian "misses the bullets."

That's the cue to bust loose for horror director James Wan (*Saw*, *The Conjuring*, *Insidious*), expertly taking over the driver's seat from four-time

F&F honcho Justin Lin. Serenity vanishes when Dom's house is blown up by Deckard, played with menacing glee by Jason Statham. In no time, Brian, Dom, his amnesiac love Letty (Michele Rodriguez is killer), and their tech-wiz comic cohorts, Tej (Ludacris) and Roman (Tyrese Gibson), are on

the road to global vengeance. Hell, that bastard Deckard has put FBI agent Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson) in the hospital.

Newbies to the cast include a welcome Kurt Russell as covert government operative Mr. Nobody, who wants the *F&F* crew to enter the terrorist lair of Mose Jakande (Djimon Hounsou) and snatch Ramsey (Nathalie Emmanuel), a computer hacker who's invented a software program called God's Eye that can track anyone anywhere via the simplest digital devices. In exchange, they can use God's Eye to find Deckard.

Got that? Doesn't matter. Chris Morgan's chronology-jumping, logic-defying plot doesn't matter a damn next to the breathtaking stunts and action. There's a hell of a head-butting fight between Diesel and Statham and a knockout scene of buckled-in drivers being parachuted onto a mountainside. And you won't believe your eyes as Dom drives a priceless Hypersport out of the 80th-floor window of an Abu Dhabi skyscraper and into another. Brian's words echo in his

ears: "Cars can't fly, Dom, cars can't fly."

Well, they do here. The filmmakers have figured out an ingenious and graceful way to give Brian a happy ending of sorts. If you've given your heart to Walker and the *F&F* crew, you can't help but well up. If you believe there's no crying in car racing, take a star off my rating. But my guess is that if God's Eye is tracking Walker somewhere, he'll be smiling.

True Story

James Franco, Jonah Hill

Directed by Rupert Goold

★★½

THE ELUSIVE BIRD OF TRUTH flies with intriguing, if wavering, purpose in this so-called *True Story*. Here's the setup: Michael Finkel (Jonah Hill), a *New York Times* reporter dismissed for fudging facts in a story about child slavery in Africa, decides to revive his career and restore his reputation by writing a book based on his jail interviews with Christian Longo (James Franco), accused of murdering his wife and three children. It seems Longo, while on the run in Mexico, had adapted Finkel's identity as a way to elude FBI capture. Maybe these two men could learn something about each other through their talks. Maybe even find redemption.

So far, so factual. The premise sparked esteemed British stage director Rupert Goold to make *True Story* his debut feature film. The mood he creates is eerie and compelling, contrasting the homey Montana cottage Finkel shares with his wife (the wonderful but wasted Felicity Jones) and Longo's sterile Oregon prison environs. It's troublesome when the script that Goold and co-writer David Kajganich carved out of Finkel's book starts taking liberties of its own, such as a prison visit Finkel's wife makes to Longo. Maybe the point is we never know who or what to believe. But too many maybes are hell on sustaining tension. What pulls us in are the performances of Franco and Hill, who know how to hold and reward the camera's tight scrutiny. They play a riveting game of cat-and-mouse.

Clouds of Sils Maria

Juliette Binoche, Kristen Stewart

Directed by Olivier Assayas

★★★½

RECALLING THE BEST MOVIES about actors, from *All About Eve* to *Birdman*, *Clouds of Sils Maria* is a bonbon spiked with wit and malice. It's also a penetrating look into the female psyche, a specialty of critic-turned-filmmaker Olivier Assayas, who wrote Ju-

It's Val (Kristen Stewart), Maria's own personal assistant, who encourages her boss to take the part of the older woman. It's also Val who encourages Maria to look at Jo-Ann Ellis (a feisty Chloë Grace Moretz), the Hollywood nova being tapped to play the role Maria made famous. In a woundingly funny scene, Maria watches Jo-Ann onscreen in a cheesy sci-fi epic and wonders what this teen darling of the tabloids has to do with acting, or with her.

screen as Val and Maria play power games to prep Maria for the role she fears. Running lines and comparing lives in a chalet high in the Swiss Alps, they get to see the literal Maloja Snake, a meteorological oddity when clouds move between mountains in the form of a serpent. Don't get too hung up on metaphors. Enjoy this film for the virtuoso acting of Binoche and Stewart, and the strange and beautiful artwork Assayas has made of them pinballing around the notion of what it means to be a woman under a microscope.

Ex Machina

Oscar Isaac, Domhnall Gleeson, Alicia Vikander

Directed by Alex Garland

★★★

THE LESS YOU KNOW GOING into this mesmerizing mind-bender, the better. But know this: Screenwriter Alex Garland (*28 Days Later*, *Never Let Me Go*) has made a striking directing debut with *Ex Machina*. The story spins on Caleb Smith (Domhnall Gleeson), a coder who's been chosen to spend a week with his reclusive billionaire boss, Nathan Bateman (Oscar Isaac), a hard-drinking Internet genius with a God complex. It's not just a grand tour of his secret lab in Alaska that Nathan has in mind for Caleb. This young geek, charmed by Nathan's cool-dude manner, is going to participate in the guru's latest experiment in artificial intelligence.

I know, I know. You've seen all this AI stuff before, most recently in the dazzling *Her* and the disappointing *Chappie*. But never like this. Garland is no showoff. He's a minimalist, hot for ethical shop talk on what defines humanity or lack of same. Luckily, his sense of humor is equally keen. Nathan invites Caleb to test android Ava (a knockout Alicia Vikander) to see how well she can simulate human behavior and sexuality. Oh, baby, you have no idea. Isaac's brilliant take on this bearded, buzz-cut and barefoot Dr. Frankenstein is a tour de force of shock and awe. *Ex Machina* springs surprises that will haunt you for a good long time.



(1) Hill and Franco fool each other in *True Story*. (2) Stewart and Binoche walk the high wire of celebrity in *Clouds of Sils Maria*. (3) Vikander tries to find what's real or virtual in *Ex Machina*.

liette Binoche her first starring role, as a young actress in 1985's *Rendez-vous*. Assayas has again cast Binoche as an actress, this time as Maria Enders, a 40-ish film star aging out of the parts she covets.

Binoche is potent perfection in the part. Trouble starts when Maria is offered a role in a stage adaptation of *Maloja Snake*, the film that made her a star 20 years earlier. No longer the sexy new kid on the block, Maria is now asked to play the middle-aged assistant with an erotic obsession for her young boss.

It's fun to see art and life intersect so teasingly. Stewart knows firsthand the heat of the fame spotlight on Jo-Ann. But as the lowly assistant, the *Twilight* star gets to watch the celeb circus from a distance. The role of Val calls for a baleful eye, rare cunning and expert comic timing. Stewart nails every nuance. It's a sensational performance that earned Stewart a César, the French Oscar that no American actress had ever won. Sweet.

It's a pleasure to watch Stewart and Binoche mix it up on-

[Cont. from 55] dates and personal context as images and artifacts were collected and organized. "It was nice," Morgen adds, "to have someone close to Kurt I could talk to over lunch and get whatever I could through osmosis." But Morgen says Frances was "the connective tissue. Who's going to say no to the daughter?"

One piece that didn't make the film: Morgen's interview with Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, which was delayed until December by Grohl's *Sonic Highways*. By then, Morgen had what he felt was the right edit of *Montage*. He says he tried to cut Grohl into the movie but "at that point, I had to say, 'It's over. This is the film.'"

Frances saw *Montage of Heck* for the first time last year, at Morgen's office, in a longer cut without the animation, which was unfinished. He brought her a stack of tissues, then left the room. Morgen says that when he came back in, "she had filled the trash can with Kleenex." She also "signed off on the spot." Her favorite part of the movie, she told him: "when it cuts to black." *Montage of Heck* ends with Kurt singing "Where Did You Sleep Last Night" on MTV's *Unplugged* in November 1993, then a black screen with a message in white: "One month after returning from Rome, Kurt Cobain took his own life." There is no coda of mourning and tribute. He's just gone.

"Brett had access to all of the media coverage, the focus on his death," Frances says, "and he didn't use any of it. The death is 99 percent of the romanticism and mythology." It's time, she says fiercely, "to put it in check."

For Morgen, his eight years on *Montage of Heck* finished a few days before Sundance, in a postproduction suite. "We got to the last shot of *Unplugged*, and I just removed myself, walked into a bathroom and collapsed - deep, deep crying," he confesses. "It wasn't the end of the movie, that he was dead. It was that I wasn't going to work with him anymore."

"And this is someone I never met," says Morgen. "I understand why people are so protective of him. There are questions I wrestled with for years: 'Would he want this film to be made? Do I have the right?'"

But, the director says, "That's not his choice anymore."

ON APRIL 10TH, 2014, NIRVANA were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. At the ceremony in Brooklyn, Grohl, Novoselic and guitarist Pat Smear played Kurt's songs with different female singers, including Joan Jett and Lorde. Love gave Grohl a hug of peace at the podium. Kurt's mother and sister also attended.

Frances was not there. Love told the crowd she was sick. That was true. "Also, it was a family reunion, televised," Frances says in her living room, explaining her ab-

sence. "And I wasn't part of Nirvana. Everyone on that stage had more to do with Nirvana than I ever did. I didn't want to accept anything on my father's behalf that wasn't my business." Her only regret about staying away: "Not meeting Joan Jett. Because I love Joan Jett."

In one way, Frances is exactly like her father: struggling to resolve her drive to achieve with what she calls "this innate sense of privacy." Frances puts it another way, quoting Kurt from a 1993 MTV News interview: "I wanted to have the adoration of John Lennon but the anonymity of Ringo Starr."

Frances is blunt about her inherited celebrity. She refers to herself, with a wicked smile, "as Kurt Cobain's spawn," and has a phrase - "the K.C. jeebies" - for the effect she has on strangers and, at times, even those close to her. "They look at me, and you can see they're looking at a fucking ghost." Last year, Frances went to Comic-Con in San Diego. "I was wearing a cardigan and had blond hair at the time. Some-

Frances has a name for the effect she has on people: "The K.C. jeebies. They look at me, and you can see they're looking at a ghost."

one turned to me and went, 'Great Kurt Cobain costume.'"

She is also proud of the standards that were set for her. That includes her mother. Frances cites Love's 1994 album with Hole, *Live Through This*, released the week Kurt was found dead. "People didn't buy that album because they felt bad for her," Frances insists. "They bought it because it was a fucking good album."

Frances is like her father in another way: her nomadic childhood. Just as Kurt shuffled between households after his parents' divorce, she grew up, by her count, "in 28 houses" with, at different times, Love, O'Connor, other relatives and a succession of nannies. Frances remembers a "foundation of normalcy" with O'Connor, "watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* every day, eating home-cooked meals, throwing snowballs at my aunt." For one summer, when Frances was 15, she worked as an intern for ROLLING STONE in New York.

"Then I'd go back to Courtney," she says. "Courtney is my mother. I love her." But, Frances adds gingerly, "she was very busy."

Love is terse but frank about her own state during Frances' teenage years. "She has had some shitty breaks," Love says.

"Until she was about 13, things were pretty idyllic. Then I just fell apart." Her voice trails off. "I came around, fortunately." Love's recent television work includes roles in *Sons of Anarchy* and *Empire*, and she is on tour in May, opening for Lana Del Rey.

Frances is a varying mix of honest and circumspect about her private life, then and now. She is reportedly engaged to Isaiah Silva, singer-guitarist of L.A. rock band the Rambles, but only refers to him during our interview, sweetly, as "my man." Yet when asked about her own experiences with drugs, Frances quickly responds with one word - "pot" - then expands: "I was exceptionally lucky to have Courtney as an example of what not to do. She knows that," Frances adds, with a warming tone in her voice, "and has accounted for it."

"I read every day," Frances says of her home routine, "and try to paint weekly. I'm one of those people who needs to look at my art with fresh eyes, every couple of days." But she sums up her ongoing role in Kurt's estate as limited - by choice. "I try to be involved as they request me to be. I can't dedicate my life to Kurt's legacy."

"She's not going to be one of those kids," says David Byrnes, an executive producer on the film and a lawyer who works with Kurt's estate. "Frances is a visual artist, so that's something [about Kurt] she is interested in." But a full-time career in the management of Kurt's image and canon, Byrnes suggests, "is not going to be her thing."

When asked how *Montage of Heck* - working with Morgen, seeing the movie to fruition - has changed her, Frances answers plainly: "It hasn't, really. It's changed my perception of who Kurt was. I'm a lot less angry at Kurt. I have more empathy and understanding."

But Morgen says he has seen a difference in Frances since their first meeting two years ago in the breakfast nook. The director recalls an e-mail Frances sent him a few days after she saw the early cut. "I was floored," he says. "She articulated her experience with Kurt over the years and how the film was very liberating."

Love affirms that: "I've definitely noticed that she's stronger and can walk a little taller." Frances, Love says, "is at a crossroads now, where she can do anything she wants - and be successful."

Late in our interview, Frances finally concedes that *Montage of Heck* "does close a chapter for me. I'll never escape how gigantic Kurt is. And that's OK. I accept that. But this movie gives me the chance to say, 'We've provided you with a service, with a piece of art I feel Kurt would be proud of. And now I have my own life to pursue. And it doesn't involve Nirvana. It doesn't involve Kurt. It doesn't involve Courtney.'"

"I'm lucky I have that ambition from my parents," says Frances. But "I want my successes to be my own."

PETE TOWNSHEND

[Cont. from 49] look at whether or not I would want to spend a year touring on my own, doing a Robert Plant, or touring with Roger, I would much prefer to go out with Roger. The reason is, we are a group. There are two of us, and we may divide the money, but we also divide the work. It's easier for me, and there are so many other levels of payoff. I hesitate to use the word, but it's a marriage. It's not always been a good one, but it's better now than it's ever been. As we say in the U.K., Roger and I are a bit Darby and Joan – we're an old couple who shuffle along. There's something very special about that.

You mentioned Dylan. Are you amazed that he continues to do 100 shows a year?

It must be something that he needs to do. I can't imagine that he finds it difficult. We met him a few times when our paths have crossed on the road, and he'll often come backstage with his entire band. He'll be sitting in the middle of the room. They surround him as though they're going to be taking a photo.

I remember when he came to one of the shows in the Northeast. Rachel [Fuller, Townshend's girlfriend] happened to be there, and he was very interested in the fact that Rachel had grown up as a classical organist. He's very keyed in to what's going on around him. He's definitely come out of that place that he had been in the Sixties, when he was shy. Or, if not shy, afraid that every person he spoke to was gonna pin him down and say, "Tell me what that means."

Are you a fan of Bruce Springsteen? Do you ever check out his shows?

I did in the early days, but not anymore. It's a bit of blood and glory for me now.

What do you think about Spotify and streaming? Is it good for the industry?

I'm a user of Spotify, so I feel like a complete hypocrite when I say: I think the guy that runs it is probably a fucking crook. Take me to court. I was reading about some artist who had something like 450,000 plays, and he got a check for [almost nothing]. It doesn't make any sense. I read a thing today that it cost the average band \$10,000 to go and play their first gig at SXSW. Jesus fucking Christ. You know, we used to get paid to do this kind of thing.

Do you ever worry that "CSI" and all those commercials using Who music are blunting the impact of the songs?

No. Exactly the opposite. And seriously, do I give a fuck? I am 70 – I don't know that the question really matters. Unless hiding behind that question is another question, which is, "Do you believe because you wrote this stuff that you own it?" That's a kind of Henry Rollins, Iggy Pop question: "Do you have the right to take a song that I listened to when I was 16 and sell beer with it?" And I think that all you can really do is say, "Well, you

know, you heard it when you were 16. I want to make sure some other people hear it when you're 60, so it's not only you that hears it."

Rachel was working on a TV show with Jerry Hall, and we went to a stable just outside London where they were shooting a scene about polo, and there was a Romanian boy who was looking after horses. He barely had any English and he said, "I understand that you're Pete Townshend?" and I said yeah, and he said, "I like your three songs." And I said, "Oh, so you like the Who?" and he said, "The Who? I don't know anything about the Who. I like your three songs." Because he was a CSI fan.

I spoke with Robert Plant last year. He basically suggested that Led Zeppelin was something he did when he was younger and he has no desire to go back there. Can you understand that sort of attitude?

I completely understand that, of course I do, but I don't want to say what leaps into my mind. Robert could probably do everything that he wants to do. He could do the occasional Led Zeppelin comeback and make a lot of people very happy. There's a

"I think I'm unusual in this respect – people don't really believe me – but I don't enjoy performing."

kind of churlishness to that [opinion]. But he's his own man, and he has to make his own decisions.

When you work on your own, you have control, and that must be important to Robert. I don't want to talk too much about him – he's a good friend and I really do respect him. But I wonder whether it would be possible for Robert to carry that sense of ironic absurdity that I feel I can carry with the Who.

Do you think that you and Roger function better as a two-piece than you did as a three-piece when John was still around?

It was getting tricky, I have to say. I don't want to infer that there was anything good about losing John. There was nothing good about it at all. But it was getting tricky dealing with the person that John had become. He shut himself away in his big house in the country. He used to have big heavy-metal sound rigs in his studio, he would sit and play night and day, go out on tour, go to clubs in L.A. and play really, really loud, and he developed this technique of playing where he sounded like a hundred people. It was quite difficult to find where one fitted into that, sometimes.

When he died, at first Roger and I sat together in a hotel room in California, and I could see that Roger was not just bereft, but also incredibly shocked and unable to function. I thought, "I'm going to have to make this decision, whether it stops or whether it goes on." If you go forward a couple of years, what Roger and I have realized is that there was a gift in it, which was that it made us look again at we two, at me as a songwriter and Roger as a singer, without any of this sense of glorifying the group, glorifying the gang.

We found a way to work together, which turned out to be fairly simple. It was Roger telling me what songs he wanted to sing and me trying to find some way of providing the music that sustained him in doing that.

To wrap this up: Every night you begin the show by blasting into the opening notes of "I Can't Explain." It sure looks like you're enjoying yourself—

[Laughs] You don't believe me, do you! Nobody believes me. The best way to enjoy it is to laugh at it. It's fucking absurd, isn't it? It was absurd when I was fucking 20, it's even more absurd now I'm 70.

Absurd in what sense?

It's just absurd! It's absurd to think that a song, written by some 18-year-old kid, about the fact that he can't tell his girlfriend he loves her because he's taken too many Dexedrine tablets, is gonna have any meaning whatsoever in the daily course of events. The first chord of "I Can't Explain" for me kind of sets the tone for the evening. Is this going to be an evening in which I spend the whole evening pretending to be the Pete Townshend I used to be? Or do I pretend to be a grown-up? [Laughs] In both cases, I think I'm pretending...

One of our best songs is "Baba O'Riley." I spent three or four weeks in the studio cutting bits of tape up of this synthesizer-y, synth-processed organ, turning it into what felt like a replication of the electronic music of the future. When I took the tape to Glyn Johns, who was one of the finest sonic engineers at the time, he said, "Pete, we can't improve on this, it's fantastic."

The guitar doesn't come in until about maybe two and a half minutes into the song. So when I'm onstage with the Who, out comes the recording that I made in my home studio. There is this moment of standing there just listening to this music and looking out to the audience and just thinking, "I fucking did that. I wrote that."

It plays, and then I deliver myself this amazing moment of being able to play this guitar. You talk about it as though it's a song from CSI [laughs]. For me, the interesting thing is that it's entirely mine – much more mine than anybody else's.

I just hope that on my deathbed I don't embarrass myself by asking someone, "Can you pass me my guitar? And will you run the backing tape of 'Baba O'Riley'? I just want to do it one more time."

DUKES OF OXY

[Cont. from 45] outside the strip mall and spotted a black SUV with tinted windows. Two square-jawed federal-agent types were sitting in the idling vehicle.

"Look!" Dodd cried. "Let's get out of here."

"You're so fucking paranoid," Barabas said. But now he eyed the parking lot as well, spotting another nondescript vehicle with two beefy men.

"Still think I'm paranoid?" Dodd asked.

The Little General took out his phone – a prepaid burner. He called the UPS store, asking to speak to the manager.

"I know the cops are trying to set me up," he said. "Put them on the phone."

Moments later, Dodd and Barabas watched as two men exited the car and walked toward the store.

"That was close," Barabas laughed as they sped off.

The brush with the law chastened even the Little General – at least a bit. He decided to start transporting their wares to Tennessee by car, but they were still shipping to Alaska. Still, he and Dodd couldn't agree on tactics. Dodd wanted to do a small number of shipments with large quantities, figuring it would reduce their chances of getting caught. The Little General hated the thought of losing the money if bigger packages were seized, like the thousands of dollars they'd forgone at the UPS store.

Growing weary of the Little General's recklessness, Dodd started doing less business with his best friend. But the Barabas brothers kept going strong, making regular trips between Florida and Tennessee – sometimes bringing along others, like Sully – stuffing thousands of pills in Pringles cans to haul north, returning home with stacks of cash. The brothers were usually completely wacked out on pills when they made the run. Dodd was convinced it was only a matter of time before they were busted, and he put more and more distance between himself and his buddies.

BY 2009, THE BARABAS OPERATION had expanded to South Carolina, and Dodd was shipping a couple of thousand pills a month to a connection in upstate New York. They were now distributing 20,000 pills a month, and the teddy bears were really rolling in. Dodd tried to be inconspicuous, living with his grandmother in the Swamp and attending business classes. But the Little General insisted on living large, with the new truck, the high-end apartment by the water and his ever-growing arsenal of weapons.

Business was great, but the reality was that many of the dudes in their posse were heavy users – junkies in truth – and they were constantly flirting with disaster. Dodd tried to cut down on his usage, but

even then he was taking 10 roxies a day, along with a couple of 40mg oxy's and a steady supply of hydroponic pot; he'd wake up in the night with cold sweats, and it took a couple of pills simply to get out of bed in the morning.

"OxyContin went from a recreational drug to an all-consuming addiction," Dodd says. "It was destroying everything in my life. My friends and family were getting arrested, overdosing, dying. I decided to cycle off the opiates, but it was much harder than I thought it would be. The aches and pains, the chills and shakes, dry mouth, insomnia – it was terrible.

"Meanwhile, the Little General was partying all the time. I was trying to keep my distance. The idea of hitting a nightclub made me want to snort an oxy. He gave me a hard time about quitting, saying I wasn't fun anymore."

These young dukes of oxy didn't know it, but the world had changed in an important and dangerous way: After years of neglect, in 2008 the DEA started a series of high-level investigations focused on pill pushers. One day Pretty Boy went

"The Little General wanted to be a teen kingpin, the new Scarface – only the white-kid version," Dodd says.

to collect another shipment at his student PO box in Tennessee, only to be surrounded by police cars in the parking lot and arrested.

"We should stop shipping to Tennessee," Dodd said when he learned of Pretty Boy's bust.

"Are you fucking crazy?" the Little General said. "We need to be shipping more. I'd rather die a legend than live as a man."

"Where'd you get that one?"

"Braveheart," the Little General said, grinning, unaware he was misquoting the film.

Shipments continued apace, only now, according to the crew, the pills were couriered directly to Pretty Boy's friend Justin Knox. The Little General's partying got even further out of hand, as he strutted around Tampa with a concealed Glock. A major bust of another opiate ring in February 2009 did nothing to dampen his spirits. But Dodd watched the TV news report in terror.

"They were guys that lived in the area," he recalls. "I'd seen them at the same pill mills and pharmacies I went to. The organization was run by career criminals with a lot of experience. We were a bunch

of kids. If they got caught, I figured we could too."

Dodd's fears proved prescient. In June 2009, Knox was nabbed in Knoxville – not for oxy or roxie, but for smoking pot at his home. They uncovered an arsenal of guns at Knox's apartment, much like the weapons the Little General kept at his place, along with syringes, a blank prescription pad and mountains of paraphernalia. Lance Barabas flew north to help Knox hire a defense attorney. The Little General thought he'd solved the problem. But according to an affidavit from a DEA agent, Knox soon met with the agency and police and spilled everything he knew about the operation – even putting the Little General at the top.

Around the same time, the DEA set up undercover operations on Knox's Tennessee connections and surveillance on the Little General and other key players. Still reckless, despite all the warning signs – the Little General continued talking about packages that contained hundreds of berries and oxy's.

"One of the dudes up in Tennessee got visited by some detectives, and they took some of our stuff – pills and cash," Dodd recalls the Little General said in a cell-phone call. "But he didn't get arrested. Don't worry: The guy doesn't know we're supplying the stuff."

"What the fuck," Dodd shouted – rightly fearing the call was being recorded by law enforcement. "I don't know what the fuck you're talking about. Don't call me with this shit." Dodd hung up. He knew he was trapped in a multimillion-dollar conspiracy without the faintest idea of how to get out.

Then, in the fall of 2009, Dodd says three packages loaded with pills were intercepted. The FedEx store called the Little General, and the manager told him they'd made a mistake in pricing the packages. Barabas – or Lance Attaway – needed to pick up the parcels or pay the difference. He and Dodd were at a gun range when the call came in.

The Little General didn't hesitate: Put the cops on the phone, he told the manager. Dodd leapt for the phone and hung up. "Are you fucking crazy?" he said.

"Fuck 'em," the Little General said. "You want to worry about something, worry about how we're going to replace those pills."

Despite all the heat, most of the crew partied on obliviously. Pretty Boy had moved home to await his fate for the drug charge he faced in Tennessee, but he was still doing pills and hitting clubs. Likewise, the Little General's abuse skyrocketed as he grew skinny and jumpy and increasingly unpredictable. Dodd finally managed to kick the drugs, so he felt in control, at least a little, even if he was filled with dread.

In early October, a dealer in Tennessee was pulled over in a traffic stop in Knox-

DUKES OF OXY

ville, a ploy Dodd believes was engineered by the DEA. The Little General called Dodd, and they met around midnight outside the Florida Aquarium, near the Little General's loft. Barabas admitted to Dodd that the DEA might now be involved. But he claimed that the dealer didn't know who they were.

"So we're cool," the Little General said.

"It's unraveling, Lance," Dodd warned.

"No, it's not. You're wrong."

But Dodd was correct: The DEA was moving. On October 20th in Knoxville, a federal grand jury issued a sealed indictment against Dodd, the Little General, Pretty Boy, Sully and 10 others in their ring. The wrestlers were completely oblivious. The Little General continued to act like he was untouchable, says Dodd, texting and making calls using words that were transparent code for drugs: blueberries, big greens, big dogs. When yet another FedEx package mysteriously disappeared, he lied to Dodd and said that the truck had crashed.

"There were packages all over the road," the Little General said.

"That makes no sense," Dodd said. "If they were all over the road, there would be pills all over the road too. You got to stop – it's fucking stupid."

"If I don't get the pills from you," Barabas said, "I'll get them from someone else."

ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 25th, 2009, Dodd gave the Little General 400 blueberries and 180 big greens. By then, the Little General had transferred to the University of South Florida, and he was pledging a fraternity. The next morning before dawn, he was in front of the frat house doing jumping jacks in his underwear and being verbally abused by seniors when a dozen DEA agents swarmed onto the lawn demanding to know which one was Lance Barabas.

Dodd remembers he was asleep in his grandmother's house when he was jolted awake by the sound of DEA agents pounding on the door. According to the agency's report, they found nearly 1,000 oxycodone tablets hidden in his room and around his grandmother's property, as well as his Sig Sauer and Smith & Wesson guns and \$23,000 cash. When his grandmother woke up, he says, she was shocked to be told that Dodd was under arrest.

"Oh, dear, not Dougie," she said.

That day, Dodd, the Little General and Pretty Boy stood in the dock in federal court. They were held without bond. Sent to county jail, the Barabas brothers went into opiate withdrawal, rocking, sweat-

ing. Dodd looked around the room and was surprised to see one of his cousins. He told Dodd he'd failed a urine test, and so he was in on a probation violation. Dodd told him about the charges he faced: the federal conspiracy indictment, the money laundering, the drugs.

"The prosecutor says I'm looking at 20 years," Dodd said.

His cousin nodded toward the Little General and Pretty Boy moaning and rocking. "You think you can trust your buddies?" he asked.

"I just don't know anymore," Dodd said.

It quickly emerged that the others named in the indictment were cooperating with the DA's office, so Dodd decided to talk too. As the leader of the ring, according to the federal government – and according to his own reckoning – Lance Barabas would receive 15 years, time he continues to serve.

"Dealing drugs was so easy," Dodd tells me, now under house arrest, finishing the final months of his five-year sentence. He's working to become a successful businessman – of the legitimate kind. "Like my old man said, 'Easy come, easy go.' There were so many times when I was with Lance and I'd tell him he was going to get us busted – but I still stuck around. I didn't listen to my own intuition. But the biggest lesson I learned is simple: Don't sell oxys."



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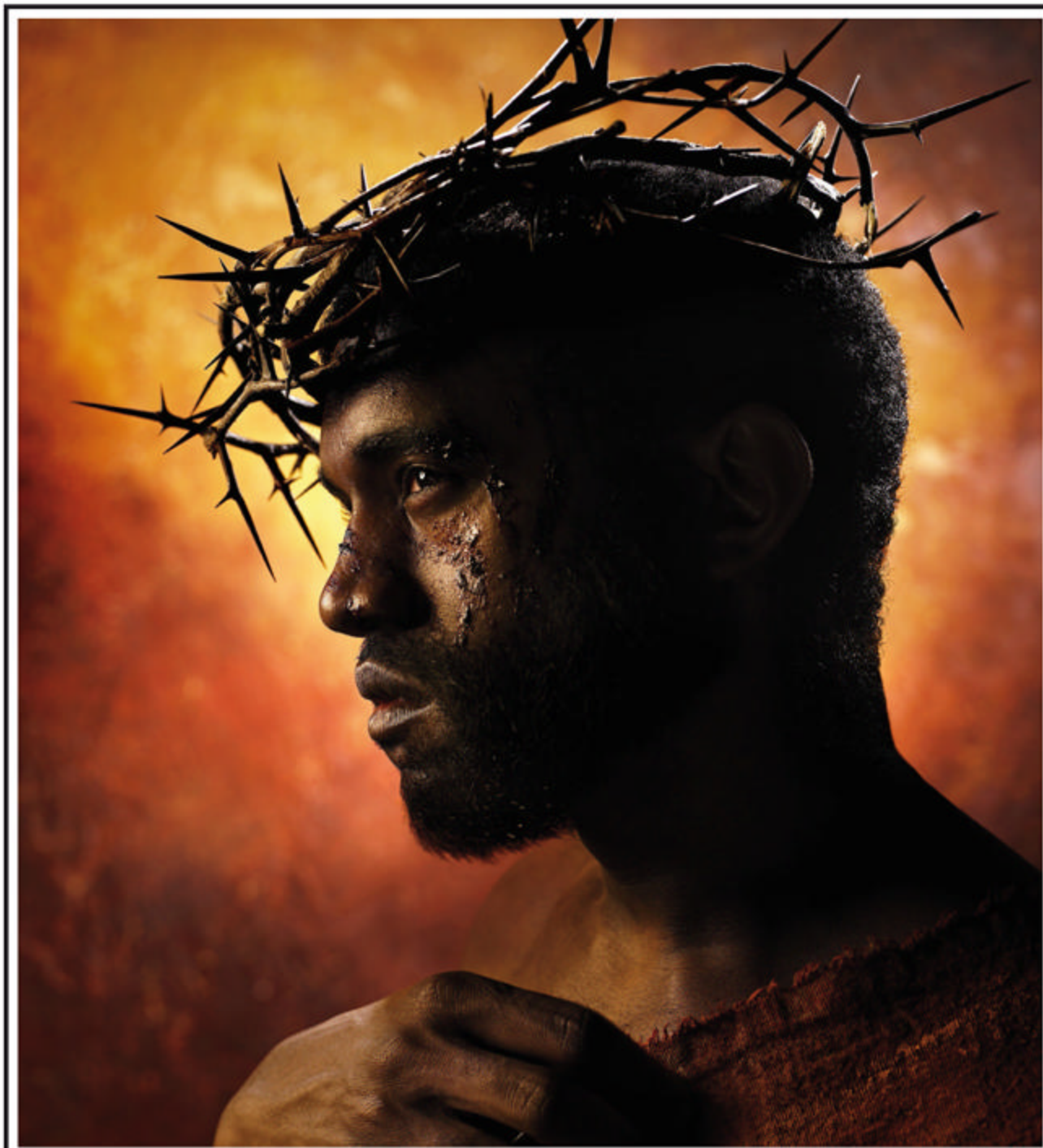


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The First Coming of Yeezus

Five months after he released *Late Registration* and told a TV audience that George Bush doesn't care about black people, Kanye West sat with photographer David LaChapelle for his first ROLLING STONE cover. "I wanted it to look exactly like the DVD cover of *The Passion of the Christ*," LaChapelle explained. "Right down to the individual thorns." The story's inside photo depicting West as Muhammad Ali was the rapper's idea. "He understands the importance of making imagery interesting," said LaChapelle.

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